

Birla Central Library

PILANI (Jaipur State)

Class No :- 327.42

Book No :- B92 B

Accession No :- 7381

DISCUSSION BOOKS

General Editors :

Richard Wilson, D.Litt., and A. J. J. Ratcliff, M.A.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

No. 45

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

ISOLATION OR INTERVENTION?

by

MAURICE BRUCE

*Associate of the Royal Historical Society ;
James Stuart Lecturer of the Cambridge University
Board of Extra-Mural Studies*



THOMAS NELSON AND SONS LTD
LONDON EDINBURGH PARIS MELBOURNE
TORONTO AND NEW YORK

First published, January 1939
Reprinted, March 1939

TO
R. W. SETON-WATSON
IN AFFECTION AND GRATITUDE

CONTENTS

I. FOUNDATIONS	9
II. FREEDOM AND SECURITY, 1485-1688 . . .	19
III. COMMERCE AND COLONIES, 1688-1763 . . .	31
IV. REBELLION, REVOLUTION, AND DICTATORSHIP, 1763-1806	47
V. CASTLEREAGH AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE, 1812-22	61
VI. CANNING AND THE BASES OF BRITISH POLICY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, 1822-27. . .	74
VII. THE AGE OF PALMERSTON, 1827-78 . . .	86
VIII. BRITAIN AND GERMANY, 1871-1914. . .	101
IX. BRITAIN AND THE WORLD SINCE THE WAR .	124
EPILOGUE	148
SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING .	152
INDEX	155

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

ISOLATION OR INTERVENTION?

CHAPTER I

FOUNDATIONS

THE political life of the British people can be considered under three heads, covering the home Constitution, Imperial relations, and foreign affairs. Of the Constitution it has been said that it does not exist at all, and its great flexibility, together with the fact that it has never been written down, certainly bears out this view. Yet this unwritten Constitution, the result of some five centuries of steady development, functions under modern conditions of change and stress with greater success than paper systems drawn up in recent times. Much the same is true of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Philosophers and politicians alike have been puzzled to find a satisfactory definition of this world-wide organization. The Constitution of the Commonwealth, like that of the United Kingdom, is in a constant state of evolution, and has well proved its adaptability.

If, then, these Constitutions prove difficult of analysis, what is to be said of the third aspect of the political side of British life, Britain's relations with the other countries of the world? If the British people are content with a Constitution which cannot be rigidly defined, is it possible to state in simple terms the lines on which British foreign policy is conducted? It is the purpose of this book to suggest answers to these questions.

At this time of serious international crisis, when the

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

formulation of a definite British policy has become a matter of vital interest and importance, the questions are of particular significance. The discussions that have marked the whole of the post-War period, and especially the last few years, have brought home to all the necessity for the framing of a policy that would enable Britain to play her proper part in the permanent establishment of world peace. Whether Britain has, indeed, played that part is a question that must be left for consideration in later chapters, but it is pertinent here to consider the opinion of a distinguished Frenchman who knows Britain well. In his *Post-War France*, Professor Paul Vaucher says :

France fully appreciates the importance of the part that Britain can play in Europe in preventing future conflicts, and feels that the British people have never properly realized the enormous influence which they alone possess.¹

A similar view is put forward by President Hoover's Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, in his study of the Far Eastern Crisis :

In the ultimate development of collective action in Europe, whether through the present League of Nations or otherwise, it is inevitable that upon the government of Great Britain and her Dominions will fall great responsibilities of leadership.²

In many parts of Europe, especially among the smaller States, views of the same kind are expressed, but lest an Englishman should be encouraged thereby to feel that foreigners have at last come to appreciate what has so long been obvious to himself, the superiority of Britain, it is as well to call to mind the old cry of "perfidious Albion," which has also been heard in the post-War years. In actual fact the accusation of unreliability expressed in that historic phrase is of a piece with Professor Vaucher's more kindly worded view that the British people have never realized the possible extent of their influence. Both arise from the fact that, successful though Britain has been in devising workable constitutional machinery and in

¹ Pages 244-45.

² *The Far Eastern Crisis*, p. 253.

FOUNDATIONS

building up a great Commonwealth, she has never yet put on a settled basis her relations with other States. Britain's foreign policy, unlike her internal and Imperial policy, has been spasmodic in operation. In times of great crisis in European history Britain has constantly intervened, often with decisive effect, but as constantly the return of peace has seen British influence decline. The periods following the Peace Treaties of Paris in 1763 and of Vienna in 1814 provide typical instances of this decline, and another followed the making of peace in 1919. Apart from those occasions when the flaring-up of some great conflagration has made clear our vital interest in continental developments, our attitude to Europe and European affairs has had in it too much of indifference, particularly in so far as the British public is concerned. The point has been aptly summed up by Professor Basil Williams in some remarks on the success of the elder Pitt in framing a definite policy for Britain :

Even up to these days, to judge from our halting policy before the late War, our foreign office has rarely been able to conceive of a fixed *raison d'état* which can be put forward and prepare the country intelligently for its responsibilities in peace and war.¹

If this failure to devise a policy on settled lines caused difficulties before the War, the introduction of an entirely new element in foreign affairs, the League of Nations, greatly increased those difficulties. Apart from the secession of the U.S.A., the League has perhaps suffered most from the indefiniteness of British policy and from the failure to reconcile the attitudes adopted towards the League by its two leading members, Britain and France. If the League is to recover, if the present long-enduring crisis is to be removed, if Britain is to play a great part in the establishment of peace on sound foundations, a settled peace policy must be framed ; British influence must make itself felt as much in peace as in war.

In the past the main reason for the fluctuations in British influence has lain in our geographical position. We are

¹ *Studies in Anglo-French History*, p. 39.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

of Europe, but yet not in it. Hence, except when the outbreak of a great war has raised the threat of invasion, or has otherwise brought home to us our nearness to the Continent, it has been possible for Britain to stand back from Europe and concentrate upon home and Imperial affairs. But the coming of aircraft and of the League of Nations has done much to change this state of things. Aircraft, though the Englishman's insularity has not yet fully appreciated the fact, has built a bridge over the Channel, while the attempt to establish a League of Nations is a recognition of the fact that the nations are more than ever interdependent, that international co-operation is more than ever a necessity. Hence, amid all the turmoil of the moment, the efforts made to reshape British policy and to establish it on a foundation that will be both acceptable and comprehensible at home and abroad.

In the framing of such a policy, as in the framing of any foreign policy, certain fundamental factors have to be considered. It has often been said that the chief factor controlling the foreign policy of a country is its geographical position, and if the word "geographical" be understood in a wide sense, this view is in the main correct. Countries cannot live in watertight compartments—however much some would now seem to wish to—and a foreign policy is merely an attempt to regulate the relations between States brought into contact with each other by their geographical position, or by some other tie. At different times men may differently interpret the regulation of these interrelations, but the fundamental necessity for some such regulation remains, and can be shown to function with striking consistency throughout a country's history.

For England the chief geographical factor determining foreign policy is the narrowness of the strip of water dividing the country from the main body of Europe. England has always been near enough to the Continent to be influenced by European developments and to be compelled to play her part in the great crises of European history, but the strip of water has been wide enough to allow at times a varying degree of isolation. Yet close proximity to the Continent is not in itself a sufficient explanation of the

FOUNDATIONS

connection between British and European affairs. Spain is even nearer to the rest of Europe and has no dividing Channel, but owing to the barrier formed by the Pyrenees Spain has been throughout her history less open to European influences. For England the determining factor is the tilt of the land towards the south-east, with the lower-lying country and the Thames estuary open towards the Continent; but for this, British history might well have run on very different lines. Had the mountainous parts of the country been on the south and east, instead of the north and west, England would have been for long difficult of access from Europe and might never have developed as a great Power. Instances of the results of this south-easterly tilt are common throughout our history—the Roman occupation, the valuable wool-trade with Flanders, the early coming of the influence of the Reformation, and our long interest in the fate of the Netherlands, the decisive factor in 1914; all these arise from this simple geographical fact. The connection with Europe has worked both ways. England has benefited from trade relations and the exchange of ideas, but at the same time she has had to take account of political movements on the Continent, especially during those recent centuries which have seen the steady growth of Britain's political and economic power. In particular, Englishmen have realized, as their acts and policies have constantly shown, that, in Lord Baldwin's words, "Britain's frontier is on the Rhine." Those on both sides of the Channel who have criticized or made light of this statement, or have regarded it as an unjustifiable threat or challenge, are ignoring historical fact and necessity. The most likely point from which an invasion of England might come has always been the flat country around the mouths of the Rhine—the Netherlands, Holland and Belgium, as we now call them. Napoleon I., who had reason to be well informed in these matters, described the Belgian port of Antwerp as "a pistol levelled at the heart of England," and the last few centuries have seen many efforts made by Britain to prevent the pistol from being held by any one strong enough to pull the trigger. It is not only fear of invasion that has brought

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

this about. Trade with the Netherlands has been an important part of English economic life for some six centuries, and the great churches of East Anglia, built out of the profits of the mediæval wool-trade, stand as lasting memorials of what was once the chief of English economic interests.

Fear of invasion has gone, though it lingered on into the Great War, and British trade has developed in fields far beyond the Low Countries, but their importance remains. Whatever Germany's feelings towards us really were in 1914, whatever the real significance of her challenge—deliberate or otherwise—to our naval supremacy, had she been able to combine with her strong naval position the occupation of Belgian ports, the result would have been a menace to Britain, not only in Europe but throughout the whole world. With France and Russia laid low, a German challenge to Britain would have been almost inevitable. It was against that fear that we moved. In standing by Belgium we acted in self-defence; our frontier, that is to say, was on the Rhine. Much has happened since 1914, and vast changes have taken place in the character and methods of war, but the importance of the Netherlands remains; the coming of the bomber has not diminished it.

The last attack on Britain launched from the Netherlands was the submarine campaign of the Great War, and the famous Zeebrugge raid has many earlier parallels. It was from the Low Countries that the Duke of Parma's army was to have been transported by the Armada for the invasion of England in 1588. Drake's fireships in Calais Roads were performing a task similar to the twisting of the dragon's tail at Zeebrugge in 1918. For fifty years in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Louis XIV. strove to gain control of the Netherlands and at the same time to make Britain a client State. His Dunkirk privateers were the prototypes of the Zeebrugge submarines. In 1793 we went to war with revolutionary France, not because of opposition to the Revolution but because the French armies overran the Austrian Netherlands. Sixteen years later, when Napoleon was at the height of his power, we made a "Zeebrugge raid" to the island of Walcheren

FOUNDATIONS

in an attempt to destroy the French bases at Antwerp. For long the enemy had been France, but in 1914 it was a German attack on Belgium that we resisted. It would be easy to multiply instances, and others will occur in the course of our narrative. Britain's interest in the fate of the Netherlands is clearly one of the guiding principles of her policy, and one that has not been neglected in the post-War period. That interest is the result of geography, not of ambition or inquisitiveness. The whole matter was summed up by an American observer a century and a half ago. While on a visit to London in 1790 Gouverneur Morris, American Minister in Paris, wrote to his Government: "If ever France should acquire the dominion of Flanders, having at the same time a good constitution, the consequence of this island is gone."

The passing of the French danger and the rise of a new Power have not altered the fundamentals of the situation. With the Rhine as pivot, we have faced west or east according to the direction from which the menace has come. That fact is embodied in the Locarno Treaties of 1925. Any dispute on the Rhine is still a matter of close concern to us.

Not only in Europe does geography, in a wide sense, shape the course of British policy. The same process can be seen at work in the building up of the Empire, the growth of which, seemingly so haphazard, has been to a large extent the result of considerations connected with foreign affairs. When, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the discovery of new parts of the world turned the Atlantic into a great trading ocean, England's geographical position made it possible for her to take advantage of this new development, and within a century English trade was beginning to spread far and wide into distant seas. Competition with commercial rivals, especially the Dutch, followed, but the chief factor in the development of the Empire was the long struggle with France. We shall see later that this struggle began as a political conflict, as resistance to French interference in English affairs, but it developed inevitably into a commercial and colonial struggle as each side tried to strengthen itself

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

against the other and to protect its own trade and colonies. England had no intention of establishing a World Empire or a commercial monopoly, but the acquisition of many parts of the Empire followed from the determination to secure trade routes and existing colonies against French attacks. Thus Gibraltar, Malta, and Cape Colony were taken to serve as naval bases for the protection of trade; the struggle to protect English trade with India ended with the almost complete expulsion of the French, and, much later, with the establishment of British political control of India; while the successful defence of the English North American Colonies against France led to the establishment of the great English-speaking countries of North America—Canada and the United States. Much of the Empire was, indeed, acquired “in a fit of absence of mind,” without any realization of the responsibilities that would later be involved. The struggle for security against France in Europe led naturally to the seizure of territory overseas which from its geographical position could be used for the protection of trade and trade-routes. Thus political, strategic, economic, and geographical factors all made their contribution to the development of British policy, and it is these factors that have shaped the “interests” which Britain has constantly defended. The word “interests” has an unpleasant sound to-day, for it suggests to many that British policy has been dictated by traders and industrialists, but it must not be forgotten that the prosperity of the country as a whole has depended—and still depends—upon widespread trade and industry. It would be better to call the factors that have shaped British policy *necessities of policy* rather than interests, and it is in this sense that the word “interests” will be used throughout this book.

Two interests which Britain has long been concerned to preserve have been naval supremacy and the “Balance of Power” in Europe. Naval strength became a necessity as long ago as the fourteenth century to protect England from invasion and to defend her merchant shipping in the Channel, but it was Henry VIII. who really founded the English Navy. His daughter Elizabeth used it to frus-

FOUNDATIONS

trate the great attempt at invasion made by Spain in 1588, and in the centuries that followed Britain's naval strength was developed to ensure the security of the home country and of her trade and possessions. Other countries, such as France and Germany, have sought security in military strength, but Britain has never been a great military Power. The existence of the Channel has dictated her reliance upon naval defence, and under modern conditions a strong navy is no less necessary than it has been in the past, for Britain is dependent to a large extent upon imports for her food supply. A naval defeat in war, or such successful interference with food supplies as was achieved by German submarines during the Great War, might well result in defeat for Britain through starvation.

With the doctrine of the Balance of Power, too, British history has been closely bound up. Stated in its simplest terms, the object of the Balance of Power theory has been to prevent any one State, or group of States, from attempting to dominate Europe to the disadvantage of others. In this doctrine Britain has had a particular interest, as it has frequently happened that an upsetting of the Balance has been accompanied by an attack on the Netherlands. British resistance to Louis XIV., to the French Revolution, to Napoleon, to William II., was justified in part by an appeal for the restoration of the "just equilibrium," as Castlereagh called it. In actual practice, however, the Balance has usually operated only when it was being disturbed; there have been few occasions when it has been restored except by war. And a war against one Power for the readjustment of the Balance has led too often, as after 1919, to a tilt in favour of another Power. The history of Europe has been, therefore, a series of pendulum swings, each swing being marked by some great international conflict. In times of such conflict Britain has played her part as an equal partner in the European State system, but her influence upon the Balance has rarely been as great in time of peace. In 1814, and again in 1919, she wished to make her influence more generally felt, but the most satisfactory means to that end have yet to be found. Lord Grey of Fallodon (the Sir Edward Grey of the pre-War years), who

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

disliked the theory of the Balance, wrote of British policy, in his *Twenty-Five Years*, that "if all secrets were known it would probably be found that British Foreign Ministers have been guided by what seemed to them the immediate interest of this country without making elaborate calculations for the future."¹ Whether this opinion can be justified on historical grounds the following pages will show. That we must take a wider view for the future seems certain.

¹ Vol. i., pp. 49-50.

CHAPTER II

FREEDOM AND SECURITY, 1485-1688

EVERY story must have a beginning, but in history it is rarely possible to find a date which can be used to mark the beginning of any of those many stories of which history itself is composed. Yet in English history a definite turning-point can be found in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688-89, one of the really decisive moments of our long history, for it is from that Revolution that England's emergence as a Great Power can be dated. It is a significant fact that as soon as the victory of Parliament over dictatorial rule was assured England took her place at a stride among the first nations of Europe. Through Parliament, which at first represented only the wealthy and politically minded minority but was later based by gradual stages upon a wide and democratic electorate, the people of Britain took control of their own destinies, and the process began which rapidly converted a small island State into a great world Power.

For two centuries before 1688, however, England stood on the defensive, protecting herself against foreign interference while she was developing the political institutions which were to be the basis of her later power. Modern English history begins with the accession of Henry VII. in 1485, after his victory over Richard III. at Bosworth Field, and it is from Henry VII.'s reign that we are commencing our study of British Foreign Policy. Long before 1485 England was becoming conscious of her nationality, but it was during the reigns of Henry VII. (1485-1509) and Henry VIII. (1509-47) that national consciousness and national independence first revealed themselves clearly and were deliberately encouraged by truly national Kings.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Hitherto the whole of Christendom had been, in theory, one great unity, ruled, under God, by the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. But the fifteenth century saw the definite collapse of all that was left of this mediæval ideal of unity. The century was marked by the appearance of the modern National-States of France, Spain, and England, ruled by Kings who owned no allegiance to Pope or Emperor, for they were, according to the theories of the times, God's own agents on earth, bringing unity, order, and wise government to their peoples. The Holy Roman Emperor, titular political head of all Christendom, was left with only a formal overlordship of Germany, and the Electors of the Empire, the men who had the hereditary right to elect the Emperor, became powerful German princes, practically independent of Imperial control (one of them, the Elector of Hanover, became King of England in 1714). In this way the Holy Roman Empire, curious relic of the days when Europe had been a unity, lingered on, in theory, until 1806, when Napoleon swept it into oblivion. Like the Emperors, the Popes lost much of their authority. The Kings of France and Spain, although they remained loyal sons of the Church, limited the Pope's authority within their own dominions, while the Reformation, which was in part a series of nationalist revolts against Rome, deprived the Popes of much of their spiritual power.

It was amid these changes from mediæval to modern conditions that England first became an independent and united National-State under the Tudor dynasty. Already, however, some of the lines of future policy had been indicated. The wool-trade with the Netherlands had long played a great part in English economic life, and the series of wars with France that had filled so many years from the end of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth had been fought in part to preserve the Netherlands from French control. But English policy had been directed mainly by dynastic considerations—by the fact that since 1066 the Kings of England had possessed territory in France, and by the claim to the French throne which had first been made by Edward III. (1327-77), a claim that was not formally abandoned until 1801. The later stages of the

FREEDOM AND SECURITY

Hundred Years' War, however, had seen the loss of the English dominions in France, and only Calais remained when Henry VII. became King. Henry did not seek to regain what had been lost. The Wars of the Roses, which had lasted intermittently for thirty years, had left England in sad need of peace and order, and Henry VII. applied his energies to internal problems. Only seventy years before, Henry V. had gone to war with France (and won the victory of Agincourt) in order to distract attention from internal difficulties ; Henry VII. preferred to solve them. Therein he showed himself a truly national King.

Yet Henry VII. did not cut himself off from Europe. Indeed, by skilful diplomacy he won for England a position of importance. To protect his throne from such pretenders as Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck he engaged in constant negotiations with foreign rulers who might have afforded asylum to these and other rebels, and at the same time he advanced English trade by making commercial treaties with the Netherlands. But to any policy of war he would not commit himself. He could have sought military glory if he had wanted it, for the Emperor Maximilian and the rulers of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, were engaged in a struggle with France and frequently sought Henry's aid. They wished him to divert part of the French forces by invading France, but Henry realized that England lacked the means for further war, and refused to be tempted. His cautious policy had its reward, for England was freed from foreign entanglements and any possibility of foreign attack while he was rebuilding her resources. His son, Henry VIII., proved more accommodating to the wishes of foreign rulers, for he was young and ambitious and much influenced at first by his wife, Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella. Several times did England attack France in Henry VIII.'s early years, but the King found that he had nothing to gain by his expeditions to the Continent, for his foreign allies were using him only to further their own designs. They needed his friendship at first in order to secure an ally against France, but later other reasons appeared. In 1516 King Ferdinand died, and was succeeded by his grandson Charles, who was also the

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

grandson of the Emperor Maximilian. Three years later Maximilian died, and Charles, already ruler of Spain and the Netherlands, became Emperor as Charles V. England thereby gained importance, as she lay on the flank of the northerly sea route between Charles's dominions in the Netherlands and Germany and those in Spain. To this was added later the attraction of English naval strength, for Henry VIII., the founder of so many of our modern institutions, is also the Father of the British Navy, the "Senior Service" (the army did not appear on a regular footing until the reign of Charles II., more than a century later). Hence it was that Charles V. made no move against England, even when his aunt, Catherine of Aragon, was being divorced by Henry; hence, too, the marriage in 1554 between Henry's daughter, Mary I., and Charles's son Philip, soon to be Philip II. of Spain. Yet a third consideration was to be found in the valuable trade between England and the Netherlands. Throughout the Tudor period, indeed, the Netherlands played their accustomed part in English affairs, first on account of trade, and later, under Elizabeth, because they formed the base from which England was to have been invaded in 1588.

Henry VIII.'s great minister, Cardinal Wolsey, tried to evolve an independent policy for England, and has been described on that account as the first of England's great foreign ministers, but he found that these political and economic ties made it impossible for England to be on any but good relations with Charles V. In any case Wolsey's aim was rather to win the papal throne for himself than to make England great, and only the Emperor had sufficient influence at Rome to sway the election of Popes. In 1518 Wolsey negotiated the "Universal Peace" in London, but he was successful only because France and her enemies were temporarily exhausted. War broke out again in 1520, and although, by the meeting with Francis I. of France at the Field of Cloth of Gold, Henry VIII. made a pretence of choosing between the opponents, the Netherlands trade left him no choice but to come down on the Emperor's side. Had England been concerned, as has sometimes been suggested, with the Balance of Power she would have thrown

FREEDOM AND SECURITY

her weight on the side of France against the might of Charles V., but Wolsey did not try this policy until 1528, when the Emperor had several times disappointed him in the matter of the Papacy. The storm of opposition that at once arose from the wool merchants compelled Wolsey, however, to abandon the French alliance, and the unpopularity which it had won for him contributed not a little to his fall in the following year.

After Wolsey's fall interest shifted from foreign to home affairs, for, owing to the growing national opposition to Papal control (which was strongly expressed in Parliament), the comparatively minor affair of Henry VIII.'s divorce became a Revolution of vital importance to the later development of England. "The last twenty years of Henry VIII.," Dr. Keith Feiling has said, "form one of the irrevocable periods in English history: the foundations then laid still hold up modern society."¹ In foreign affairs the period is important, as it marks the end of a close connection with the Continent that had lasted since 1066. After the breach with Rome England was definitely launched upon a purely national career, and she tended in consequence to draw back from the Continent. The tendency was increased when, after Henry's death, the Counter-Reformation threatened England with an invasion for the restoration of Roman Catholicism. Henry's navy then served the country well, for it kept foreign enemies at arm's length. The moral was clear, and Elizabeth certainly learnt it. If England were to develop on national lines, and without foreign intervention, she must maintain her security by naval strength. Isolation was possible only behind an impassable barrier.

The two short reigns that followed the death of Henry VIII.—those of Edward VI. and Mary I.—were marked by a rapid development of the religious problem in England, as on the Continent, and also by the last attempt to draw England back into the close connection with Europe from which Henry VIII. had led her. By her marriage with Philip of Spain the unhappy Mary committed England to war with France in support of Spain,

¹ *England under the Tudors and Stuarts*, p. 41.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

and Calais, the last relic of English dominion in France, was lost in 1558. It was a blow which Mary felt deeply, and she did not long survive it. On her death her half-sister Elizabeth succeeded her as Queen.

Of Elizabeth, with all her faults, it is difficult for an Englishman to speak without enthusiasm. Victor Hugo has described her as the very incarnation of her country, and it is certain that Elizabeth regarded herself as in some special way wedded to England. Throughout her reign she pursued but one end, the security and well-being of her kingdom ; all the twists and turns of her policy, which so baffled her contemporaries, even those nearest to her, can be explained by that great aim. For the greater safety of England she refused marriage with foreign princes, and other foreign adventures ; for England, too, she declined the crown which the people of the Netherlands offered her when they revolted against Philip II. England's security was Elizabeth's end, extreme caution her means. Yet the difficulties of her position might well have tried a stouter heart. She found the country weak on her accession, its resources overstrained by Mary's policy. The Counter-Reformation against Protestantism was being launched throughout Europe, and it was not long before Philip II. put himself forward as the champion of the Church for the extirpation of heresy. Religious feeling was running high in England, and in Mary of Scotland, wife of Francis II. of France, there was a rival to the throne. Yet in thirty years Elizabeth created the conditions for the greatest flowering of English artistic life, culminating in the genius of Shakespeare. Small wonder that Cromwell, in the troubled years of the following century, looked back upon her with a deep respect.

In spite of his zeal for the Church Philip II. had no desire at first to attack England. He preferred to win Elizabeth's friendship by more conciliatory means, and the Queen took skilful advantage of the fact. Philip wanted England's assistance against France, even as his father had wanted it earlier, and Elizabeth prevented any interference with England by playing off the enemies one against the other. It was a tortuous policy, but it was justified by its success.

FREEDOM AND SECURITY

For thirty years, while England was recovering strength and prosperity, Elizabeth held off Philip, and when in 1588 the great attack of the Armada came, the English naval forces, which Elizabeth had done so much to build up, were able to rout the enemy. "Afflavit Deus," said the Queen, but it was rather to English gunnery that the victory was due. And naval strength was supported by a spirit of patriotism in the country that Elizabeth knew well how to evoke. "I know that I have the body of a weak and feeble woman," she told the soldiers at Tilbury in 1588, "but I have the heart and stomach of a King, and of a King of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any other prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm." "What a woman," said Pope Sixtus V. "She braves the greatest King by land and sea . . . if she had not been a heretic she would be worth a whole world."

With the failure of the Armada the foreign danger was removed, and once again interest shifted to internal problems. The century from 1588 to 1688 saw the development, and in the end the settlement, of the long struggle for constitutional government in England. That the struggle was fought out without such foreign intervention as added to the horrors of the Wars of Religion in France (1562-98) is due in the first place to the achievements of Elizabeth. By skilful diplomacy she had prevented an untimely attack on England. She realized that, although England could not play a vigorous part in continental affairs, she could yet prevent, by sea-power, any interference with her own development. That Elizabeth gave some help to the Netherlands in their revolt, and later assisted Henry IV. of France, is no exception to her rule, for such help was intended mainly to keep Philip II. occupied at the other side of the Channel. Her whole diplomacy, in fact, was directed to the service of England. With England's neighbours, the Scots, her relations were particularly friendly, and the encouragement and assistance which she gave to the Scottish Protestants did something to prepare the way for the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707. At the same time a danger to England's northern frontier was removed, for

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Scotland abandoned the French alliance which on so many occasions in the past had brought about a Scottish invasion of England while England and France were at war. Even in the Middle Ages France sought allies at the far side of her enemies, and the Franco-Soviet Pact of to-day has its prototype in the mediæval alliance with the Scots. But during Elizabeth's reign, and with English assistance, French influence was removed from Scotland; henceforth England's northern frontier was secure.

From Scotland came Elizabeth's successor, King James VI., to rule as James I., first of the Stuart line in England. James was a pacifist—or so we should call him to-day—and he tried to pursue a peaceful policy, hoping to maintain by diplomacy the prestige of England, which Elizabeth had raised so high. At the beginning of the reign his views coincided with those of the able minister whom Elizabeth had left to her successor, Sir Robert Cecil, afterwards Earl of Salisbury, an ancestor of Queen Victoria's last Prime Minister. Cecil was in favour of peace with Spain, as trade was suffering from a war that had lasted for twenty years, and in 1604 peace was made. It was a wise move, for the reign of Elizabeth had seen the beginnings of a great expansion of English trade and industry, especially in cloth, and peace was necessary for its development. The great Chartered Companies, notably the Muscovy, Levant, and East India Companies (founded respectively in 1555, 1581, and 1599), were now carrying English cloth into Russia, the Near East, and India, and during the next century the search for fresh markets led to the rapid expansion of this trade. Yet there were few who read aright the signs of the times. The pacific policy of James I. and Cecil was not popular, and most Englishmen would have welcomed a return to the buccaneering exploits of the Elizabethan seamen, mainly because of their virulent opposition to Roman Catholicism, which was inflamed by such events as the "Gunpowder Plot" of 1605, and which was to mark English life for the next three centuries. So strong was this religious motive, so fresh the memory of Elizabeth's triumphs, that peace, with all its advantages, was not popular. Hence James's difficulties when, in 1618, a great

FREEDOM AND SECURITY

religious conflict, the "Thirty Years' War," broke out in Germany. Public opinion, vociferously expressed in Parliament, demanded intervention on the Protestant side, the more so because the husband of James's daughter Elizabeth, the "Queen of Hearts" (from whom our present Royal Family is descended), was actively engaged in the struggle, and Elizabeth was adored by the English. James, hating war, believed that he could best help his son-in-law by diplomatic pressure at Madrid, in the hope that the King of Spain would restrain his kinsman, the Emperor, in Germany, but there was a widespread demand in England for war. James resisted the agitation for some time, but in 1624 his favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, persuaded him to declare war on Spain, and when the King died a year later the war had given him a popularity he had never before known. The public had what it wanted, war with Spain, but as the main centre of the Thirty Years' War was in Germany the Anglo-Spanish conflict had little effect upon it.

The war, which was hopelessly mismanaged by Buckingham, dragged on through the first years of Charles I.'s reign, but on Charles's accession in 1625 interest became concentrated almost entirely on the constitutional struggle that led to the Civil Wars. In his handling of foreign affairs, as of home affairs, Charles showed himself no statesman, and within ten years of his accession English prestige had sunk so low that Barbary pirates from the Mediterranean raided our south-western coasts. Had it not been for the fact that continental States were fully occupied with the Thirty Years' War the whole development of England might well have been checked. It is true that Charles realized the importance of the navy, but the money he raised for it by the notorious "ship-money" levies was badly administered, and when the Civil War broke out in 1642 the navy at once declared for Parliament. In actual fact it was not naval strength but simply the preoccupation of the Continent that preserved England from "intervention" during the Civil Wars.

From this position of weakness and isolation England was drawn by Cromwell, who, in the words of the poet

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Marvell, "once more joined us to the Continent." Cromwell was essentially an Elizabethan, swayed mainly by religious motives, and he saw Europe divided into two camps, the Protestant and the Catholic. It was his ambition to unite the Protestant States into a great federation, and he particularly desired a close union with the Dutch. But the era of religious wars was already passing, and commercial rivalry was to cause three Anglo-Dutch wars between 1650 and 1674. Cromwell's scheme failed, but he was able to restore to England the prestige that James I. and Charles I. had lost. In 1655 he joined France against Spain, and the military and naval power of the Commonwealth, based on money raised by heavy taxation and by fines imposed on Cavaliers, gave England a position she had never before held. Jamaica was captured, and Admiral Blake cruised in the Mediterranean against the Barbary pirates, while Cromwell's redcoats won renown on continental soil in the Battle of the Dunes outside Dunkirk. All these exploits were indications of what was to come later, but at the moment England was still unable to bear the burden of a continental war. Cromwell was the first ruler of England who was able to draw on the resources which trade was building up, but he strained them too far, for Spain was a good customer. When he died economic ruin was in sight. His greatest mistake, though in view of his character it was a natural one, was his support of France against Spain, for Spain was now the declining, France the rising, Power. It was the assistance given by Cromwell and Charles II. that helped France to achieve that position of supremacy from which, a short half-century later, we had to shake her.

Whatever the basic errors of his policy, Cromwell had made England strong and respected, and had pointed the way for the future. His success in inducing France in 1655 to compel the Duke of Savoy to stop the persecution of the Protestants in the Vaudois valley (an event which inspired Milton's sonnet, "Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered Saints") is evidence of the prestige acquired for England by the Lord Protector. The "Nonconformist conscience," which is often regarded as Cromwell's greatest contribution

FREEDOM AND SECURITY

to English life, was to rise to similar heights in the nineteenth century, and it is not too much to suggest that English sympathy for oppressed peoples, which has often influenced our foreign policy and has shown itself as recently as the Italo-Abyssinian War, finds its origins in Cromwell's sympathy for persecuted Protestants.

The Restoration of Charles II. in 1660 was followed by a decline in England's influence. Charles was a zealous admirer of France and of the French King, Louis XIV., and it was only his determination never again to be compelled to live the life of an exile that checked his desire to maintain a close friendship with France. In 1670 he planned with Louis the partition of the Dutch States, but after only two years of war, Parliament, alarmed at Louis XIV.'s growing power, compelled Charles to drop the scheme. Louis XIV.'s aim was to ensure, at the least, English neutrality while he made himself supreme on the Continent, and his able diplomacy, combined with Charles II.'s friendliness, did much to achieve that object. But his designs on the Netherlands, his suppression of Protestantism in his own dominions, and the fear—by no means unwarranted—that he was prepared to give Charles II. military assistance for the re-establishment of Roman Catholicism in this country, all these factors created a strong opposition in England to French ambitions. For the first time Englishmen began to realize that England's interests were closely connected with those of the rest of Europe. For the first time the danger to England and Europe alike of the supremacy of a great military Power made itself felt; the idea of the Balance of Power became real. And, as was to happen many times later, it became apparent that the preservation of the Balance was closely connected with the fate of the Netherlands. France needed the Netherlands to make her supremacy certain, but the very attempt to secure them brought upon Louis XIV. the opposition of England, now in a position to challenge him. Charles II. realized the force of the growing dislike of France in England. In the last years of his reign, when his relations with Louis XIV. were particularly friendly, he warned the French King that their friendship would be destroyed if any attack were

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

made on the Netherlands. It was unfortunate that in later years Louis forgot this warning.

In foreign affairs, then, the reign of Charles II. compares very unfavourably with the rule of Cromwell, but in other respects it was a period of great importance. Charles was keenly interested in the navy, and with the help of such able men as Pepys kept it at the high level of the Commonwealth. With a strong fleet as its protection trade rapidly expanded, and the resources that were to carry the country through the wars with France were thereby built up. At the same time a great impetus was given to the colonization of North America. The Pilgrim Fathers had settled there in the reign of James I., and other colonists soon followed: in this matter, again Charles II. showed a lively interest. The American colonies were developed partly as markets for home produce and partly as sources for the supply of such things as shipbuilding materials, and their growth was fairly rapid. The foundations of the British Empire had been laid.

The main lines of development in the future were now beginning to appear—protection of the Netherlands in Europe, development of colonies overseas, expanding trade throughout the world, and as a stout support for all this activity, naval strength. When in 1688 the last Stuart King by his incredible folly threw away his kingdom, the English people took their destiny into their own hands. Hitherto, from the time of Henry VII., England had stood on the defensive in Europe while she built up her resources. Now she was prepared to take the offensive. The “Endless Adventure”¹ had begun.

¹ The title of Mr. F. S. Oliver's study of British politics, based on the career of Walpole.

CHAPTER III

COMMERCE AND COLONIES, 1688-1763

WHEN James II. fled from England at the end of 1688 he sought refuge in France. Louis XIV. at once espoused his cause, and there followed the outbreak of the first of the seven Anglo-French wars which were to occupy nearly half of the years between 1688 and 1815. Ultimately this long conflict became a struggle for colonies, but in the early stages it was rather Religion and Liberty that inspired English opposition to France. Hostility to Louis XIV. had been born during Charles II.'s reign, and English feeling, still liable to be swept into hysteria by religious passion, as was shown by the "Popish Plot" episode of 1678, had been deeply stirred by the intolerance in France which drove Protestant exiles to England. It was feared that after the suppression of French Protestantism Louis would invade England to restore Roman Catholicism and abolish the liberties of Parliament, while the combination of autocratic leanings and friendship with France which marked both the secretly Catholic Charles II. and the openly Catholic James II. tended to excite these fears still further. They could hardly have been greater if it had been known that in the secret treaty of Dover (1670) Louis had promised to Charles II. military assistance for the suppression of Protestantism in England. Then—when James II. fled to France after his short reign of three years, during which he had dispensed with Parliament and had built up a threatening army officered by Roman Catholics—it seemed clear proof that the strings of the attack on England's civil and religious liberties were being pulled from France. The attempts made by Louis to restore James by means of a

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

French invasion of England served but to strengthen the conviction, and as a result patriotic and religious feeling united Englishmen against the French danger. Once again, as in the time of Elizabeth, England was facing a threat to her freedom of development. Louis XIV.'s aim was a simple one. He wished to be sure of England's friendship—or, at the least, of her neutrality—while he was making France supreme on the Continent, and he therefore preferred a Roman Catholic England, ruled by an autocratic Stuart King, to a fiercely Protestant country, ruled, as England was after 1689, by his greatest enemy, William III., for William had led the Dutch in their resistance to the French invasion of Holland in 1672 and had devoted his life since then to the frustration of Louis's ambitions. The English Parliament was equally abhorrent to the French King, as it had developed during Charles II.'s reign a strong opposition to France's ambitions. In 1677, three years after Parliament had compelled Charles II. to abandon the war with the Dutch which he was undertaking in alliance with Louis, a French traveller in England reported to his Government that "the members of the House of Commons would sell their shirts in order to prevent France conquering the Low Countries"—an indication that even in the seventeenth century M.P.'s could become as heated about foreign affairs as they sometimes are to-day!

Louis XIV. was not a man to allow his ambitions to be thwarted, and he tried to keep Parliament in order by encouraging Charles II. and James II. in their leanings towards autocracy and Roman Catholicism. When this policy led to James II.'s fall, Louis, a successful autocrat himself, failed to understand what was happening in England and imagined that he could dispose of English opposition by restoring James. Hence his attempts at invasion. English resistance, therefore, was defensive, an attempt to stave off foreign interference with England's political and religious development.

The struggle began in Europe, but it spread gradually over the world, partly because of the widespread colonial and commercial interests of both countries, and partly as a result of factors which were, to a large extent, geographical.

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

In view of her position England's best defence against invasion lay in naval strength and supremacy in the Channel, but she was also open to attack from the west, from Ireland, and it was in Ireland that James II. landed with a French army in 1689. A year later the combined English and Dutch fleets suffered defeat at the hands of the French off Beachy Head, and a serious crisis followed, for the French then prepared for an invasion of England. The danger was removed, however, by William III.'s victories in Ireland and by the decisive defeat of the French fleet off Cape la Hogue in 1692. Home waters were now safe, but the French ships of war had to be sought out wherever they might be, and as the long struggle went on the naval war spread to the Mediterranean, to the Indian Ocean, and to African and American waters. Each side tried to cripple the other by attacking its seaborne trade, and as England was more dependent than France upon her imports, especially upon those from her American colonies, English naval strength grew in proportion to the development of trade. Moreover, as fleets tended to operate farther and farther from home ports, it became necessary to find naval bases for them. Merchant shipping in distant seas could not be protected by warships which had to return to England for repairs, and there was always danger from winter storms when ships had to make long voyages home after their season's work. The danger was clearly shown in October 1707, when Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell, whose fame is perpetuated by an elaborate memorial in Westminster Abbey, was lost off the Scillies with three ships when returning from the Mediterranean. It was to avoid such disasters, and to protect trade routes, that Gibraltar (1704) and Minorca (1708) were captured. Similarly, a century later (in 1806), Cape Colony was taken to provide a naval base for the protection of British trade with India.

The wars were not confined to Europe and to trade routes. By the end of the seventeenth century both England and France had developed colonial activity in America, and the political struggle in Europe led to attacks by each country on the other's settlements in America and trading

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

posts in Africa and India. During the eighteenth century this colonial conflict became predominant. England was fighting for her independence and for the security of her trade and colonies, and she flung all her resources into the struggle. By 1763 she had become supreme in the colonial world ; the first British Empire was founded. But although the Anglo-French struggle was decided in the commercial and colonial spheres it was never purely economic at bottom ; it had arisen out of Louis XIV.'s intervention in English affairs, and that political factor retained its importance.

In 1689, when the war with France began, England was still on the defensive, and was determined to get from foreign States recognition of the constitutional changes made in 1688-89. James II. had been replaced by Protestant rulers, Mary II. (James's elder daughter) and her husband, William III., and "The Protestant Succession" became one of England's war-cries. William and Mary were followed by Anne (1702-14), who in her turn was succeeded by George I. The recognition of these Protestant rulers by Louis XIV. and the withdrawal of help from the exiled Stuarts were among the conditions of peace forced upon France in 1697 and 1713, and were intended to prevent a repetition of James II.'s attempt to recover his throne with the aid of French troops.

Such was home defence. Abroad, English policy was concerned with defence against invasion and with the protection of trade and colonies, and certain threads of policy can be traced through the whole course of the wars with France. The first line of defence was the navy, which was also necessary for the protection of trade, and apart from a brief, but fatal, lapse under George III. the British Navy retained its supremacy for more than two centuries after 1692. With naval defence went the preservation of the independence of the Netherlands. France must not be allowed to gain control of the Northern Provinces (Holland) or of the Southern Provinces (the modern Belgium), which were Spanish until 1714, when they passed into Austrian possession. If England and Holland should quarrel, wrote Marlborough, in 1703,

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

France would then gain (her) point, which I hope in God I shall never live to see, for our poor country would then be the miserablest part of all Christendom, for we should not only lose our liberty, but our religion also.¹

Some forty years later the elder Pitt insisted in a parliamentary speech that "an intimate connection with the Dutch should be the basis of our foreign policy," while towards the end of the century Edmund Burke, the political philosopher, spoke of Holland as "that which, under a foreign name, is the most precious part of England." Clearly the eighteenth-century Englishman was well aware of the importance of the Netherlands to his country's security.

Farther afield England concentrated upon the defence of her trade routes. "We are a trading nation," said an English envoy to a French minister in 1711, "and as such must secure our traffic."² And with the protection of trade went the possibility of naval attacks upon the enemy and his merchant shipping. Hence English interest in the Mediterranean, the highway for England's Levant trade (which had first become important in Elizabeth's reign) and a possible base for operations against France. Cromwell had been the first English ruler to send a fleet to the Mediterranean to protect the Levant trade, and it was actually he who first suggested that England should seize Gibraltar, "for," he wrote, "would it not be both an advantage to our trade and an annoyance to the Spaniard?"³ The idea of capturing a naval base in the Mediterranean was taken up by England's next great soldier, the Duke of Marlborough, during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-13). Gibraltar was seized in 1704, but as it possessed no good harbour, Minorca, a far more useful base, was taken four years later. Minorca was retained until 1782, when it was lost to Spain, but the loss was made good when Malta was acquired in 1800. Gibraltar, with its limited size, was never equally useful as a naval base, but its position at the entrance to the Straits

¹ Coxe, *Memoirs of the Duke of Marlborough*, vol. i., p. 134.

² Portland MSS., V., p. 38.

³ John Buchan, *Oliver Cromwell*, p. 495.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

that bear its name has given it an importance which it has not even yet lost. "The Streight's mouth," wrote Addison, the poet and essayist (who was also something of a politician), a few years after the capture of Gibraltar, "is the key to the Levant,"¹ and as a key Gibraltar has always been regarded in Britain.

So began Britain's long history as a Mediterranean Power. Farther afield again, an important sphere of interest lay in the West Indies. Throughout the eighteenth century trade with the West Indies and the Spanish American colonies played a very great part in Britain's economic life, for such things as sugar, coffee, tobacco, and snuff were exchanged against British manufactures and negro slaves. The importance of the trade can be judged from the long list of conquests and naval engagements with which the historical map of the islands is bespattered. In 1759 both Canada and Guadeloupe, the rich West Indian island, were captured from France, and during the peace negotiations that followed the British Government had to decide which of them to retain. In the end Canada was kept, but the hesitation of the Government in making the decision was the measure of the importance of the West Indies at that time. Equally important was the trade with the Spanish colonies. Strictly speaking, the Spanish Government forbade foreigners to trade with these colonies, but by the "Asiento" ("Contract") system it allowed foreign ships to supply them with African negro slaves, and the slave trade was used as cover for a good deal of smuggling. A lucrative, though hardly legal, trade in English cloth developed in this way, and it was the monopolizing of this "Asiento" market by France which, as we shall see, became one of the causes of England's entry into the Spanish Succession War. It is impossible now to express anything but horror at the idea of a war fought, in part, for the right to snatch unfortunate negroes from their homes in Africa, to convey them under appalling conditions across the Atlantic (many of them died miserably on the way), and to sell them in America. Yet in 1713 the Mayor of Bristol spoke of the trade, with its opportunities for the

¹ Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne*, vol. i., p. 415.

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

sale of cloth, as "the great support of our people,"¹ and a contemporary Dutch statesman once declared that the settlers in America "could no more live without negroes than (without) bread."² To-day we deplore the fact that the trade once existed, but it must be remembered that none condemned it in its own day, and that humanitarianism was a later creation of the eighteenth century. Whatever her earlier gains from the trade, Britain, under the influence of Wilberforce, was the first to abolish it in 1806.

These, then, were the main lines of British policy during the struggle with France. But the wars and diplomacy of the period were by no means concerned only with overseas trade. For the first time for two centuries English armies fought long campaigns on the Continent, and close alliances were made with foreign States, notably with Holland, the Empire, and Prussia. There were many then, as there have been many since, who were opposed to our taking so active a part in the continental struggle; they demanded that England's main effort should be directed to colonial and commercial expansion, to breaking down her opponents' resistance by depriving them of their resources in trade and colonies. This policy was not neglected, but in the face of the overwhelming power of France England could not—and dared not—leave Europe to be overrun by French armies. England could capture all the enemy's overseas possessions, as she did during the Napoleonic wars, but Napoleon was to show that the loss of trade would not suffice to bring France to her knees when she had conquered all Europe and could draw on its resources. The lesson was repeated during the Great War, and has not been lost on Germans, for National-Socialism is hopeful of making Germany almost independent of overseas supplies by giving her the economic, if not the political, control of Central Europe.

Experience has shown, then, that it is doubtful whether a blockade alone can defeat a Power aiming at the mastery of Europe, and it is for this reason that Britain has been compelled since 1688 to enter actively into continental

¹ Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne*, vol. iii., p. 148.

² Portland MSS., IX., p. 329.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

struggles. In the Spanish Succession War her American trade was secured by Marlborough's great victories (Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet—1704, 1706, 1708, and 1709); and in the Seven Years' War, half a century later, Canada was conquered, as the elder Pitt claimed, on the plains of Germany. The interconnection between Britain's European and colonial policies has, therefore, been a close one, and the ambitions of modern Germany and Italy do not suggest that the connection has ceased to exist in our own day.

The first stage in Britain's active intervention in continental warfare came with the "War of the League of Augsburg," 1689-97. For the first three years England was occupied with the campaigns in Ireland and with the attempted invasion of England, to which we have already referred. This phase of the war was over by 1692, and the main interest was then focused upon the campaigns in the Netherlands, where victories on both sides brought the war to an indecisive close. By the Peace of Ryswick (1697) Louis XIV. made no gains, and actually returned some recent acquisitions. It was the first treaty of his reign which had added nothing to French territory, and it marked the turning-point in his career. The entry of England into the war seemed to have turned the scales against him, and it was at the hands of an English soldier, Marlborough, that he was to suffer serious defeats in the next war.

Actually, Louis had been anxious for peace because of a great international problem that was rapidly arising—the question of the succession to the crown of Spain. The King of Spain, Charles II., was an unhappy and half-mad individual, euphemistically known to his subjects as "Charles the Bewitched." He had been ailing all his life, and by 1697 it was clear that his feeble grasp of life could not endure much longer. But he had no obvious heir, and as the Spanish Empire included Naples, Sicily, Milan, and the Southern Netherlands in Europe, as well as vast territories in the New World, the problem of the succession threatened grave complications for the peace of Europe. There were at first three possible successors, all of them closely related

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

to Charles II.—the Duke of Anjou (a grandson of Louis XIV.), who eventually became King of Spain as Philip V. ; the Archduke Charles of Austria (son of the Emperor Leopold), who later became Emperor as Charles VI. ; and Prince Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria.

To prevent the possibility of a war when Charles II. should die, Louis XIV. and William III. arranged in 1698 that the Bavarian prince should be the heir, but that France and the Empire should each receive, as a consolation prize, some part of the Spanish dominions in Italy. Unfortunately Joseph Ferdinand died in 1699, and a second agreement had to be made. This divided all the Spanish possessions between the two surviving candidates, the Archduke Charles getting the greater part. But the idea of partition was unpopular in Spain, and when Charles II. died at last in November 1700 he left the whole of his dominions to Philip of Anjou, with the proviso that, if he should refuse them, the whole inheritance should pass at once to the Archduke Charles.

This offer put Louis in a very difficult position, for he knew well enough that if he kept his word to William III., and refused to take all that was offered to him for his grandson, the Emperor Leopold would have no qualms about accepting the whole inheritance for his son, the Archduke. After some hesitation, therefore, Louis accepted the will, and Philip was proclaimed King of Spain. William III. was disgusted, and the Emperor declared war, but the accession of Philip did not seem to England a matter of vital concern, and the new King was accordingly given formal recognition.

Yet war followed within two years, and the reason is to be found in the policy of Louis XIV. Having proclaimed his grandson King, he proceeded to occupy the Spanish Netherlands in his name, but treated them as if they were to be in future a part of France. This was a direct blow to Dutch and English alike, and its effect upon public opinion in England has been compared to the effect of the German invasion of the same territory in 1914.¹ Shortly afterwards Louis took an even more serious step. He wished

¹ Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne*, vol. i., p. 139.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

to secure for France the monopoly of trade with Spain and the Spanish dominions, and he therefore compelled Philip to grant the "Asiento" to French merchants. The blow to English trade was a serious one, and a cry for war was at once raised in England. The recovery of the Spanish market was one of England's chief aims in the long war that followed; in 1715, two years after the war had ended, an English minister, who was framing a new commercial treaty with Spain, wrote that

the preservation of the commerce between the kingdoms of Great Britain and Spain was one of the chief motives for entering into the long late and expensive war and one of the principal benefits expected by our people from the conclusion of peace.¹

The "Asiento," in fact, was one of Britain's most important war gains.

But commercial considerations could not unite all England against France. It was Louis XIV.'s third act that made war inevitable. In September 1701 James II. died in exile, and Louis immediately recognized his son ("The Old Pretender") as James III. Yet once more, and in spite of his promise to recognize the "Protestant Succession," Louis had interfered in English affairs; all England rose against him. Twelve years of war followed this gratuitous challenge, and when peace was made at Utrecht in 1713 France had suffered serious defeat, while England had gained all for which she had fought. By the Treaty of Utrecht England's trade was secured, and Gibraltar, Minorca, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland became British possessions. But the chief result of the Spanish Succession War for Britain was the laying of the foundations upon which her future prosperity and expansion were to be based. "Before that war," says the naval historian, Mahan, "England was one of the sea powers; after it she was *the* sea power, without any second."²

Unfortunately, party controversy under Queen Anne had become so bitter that even questions of peace and war were matters of serious controversy between Whigs and

¹ Basil Williams, *Stanhope*, p. 27.

² *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, p. 225.

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

Tories. The Tories had been opposed to the war on the Continent, and had wished the struggle to be confined to the commercial and colonial spheres, whereas the Whigs strove for a decisive defeat of the French in Europe, and went beyond the original war aims of the Allies by carrying on the war unnecessarily long in the hope of being able to expel Philip V. from Spain. In their two years of power, from 1708 to 1710, the Whigs induced their allies—and especially the Dutch—to continue the war by promising them highly advantageous peace terms when Philip V. should be deposed. By 1710, however, the war had lasted long enough, and when the Tories took office in that year they immediately initiated the secret negotiations which led to peace three years later. The secrecy of the negotiations and the fact that, although Britain made very substantial gains, her Allies did not get all that the Whigs had promised them, resulted in the raising, for the first time, of the cry “perfidious Albion”; a charge that was to be repeated, under somewhat similar circumstances, after the Peace of Paris in 1763. It is a striking example of the dangerous influence that party rivalry can have upon foreign policy.

The Treaty of Utrecht was followed by a period of peace that was not seriously broken for twenty years. One great disturber of the peace passed from the scene when Louis XIV. died in 1715, and his death was followed by a period of some fifteen years during which a common interest in the preservation of peace drew Britain and France together. The new Hanoverian dynasty in Britain needed peace in order to establish itself firmly, and in France—as Louis XIV.’s great-grandson and successor, Louis XV., was only five years old—the insecurity of the succession necessitated a cautious policy. Friendly relations with Britain actually lasted until the birth of a son to Louis XV. in 1729.

On the whole, however, Britain’s main interest in the years that followed 1713 lay in the consolidation of her war gains and the development of her commerce, and the period is always associated with the name of Sir Robert Walpole, one of Britain’s greatest peace ministers. Walpole was in power for twenty years from 1722, and this

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

long period of office was marked by quiet constructive work that was characteristic of the man who took as his motto *tranquilla non movere*—"let sleeping dogs lie." But for these twenty years of "peace and reconstruction" the twenty years of war that followed Walpole's fall could hardly have ended, as they did, with the triumph of Britain and the establishment of the first British Empire. Walpole realized that peace was necessary for the security of the dynasty and for the development of British trade and colonies, to which he paid close attention. As a result, trade expanded, both at home and in the colonies, and Britain was able to remain neutral in the War of the Polish Succession (1733-38) in which no British interests were involved. "Madam," said Walpole to Queen Caroline in 1734, "there are fifty thousand men slain this year in Europe, and not one Englishman." It was a proud boast, but Walpole found that pacifism was not always possible, and not always popular, for a more serious problem arose that was destined to drag him reluctantly into war in 1739. Since the Treaty of Utrecht Britain had had, in addition to the "Asiento," the right to send one trading ship a year to Spanish America. The privilege was grossly abused and made the excuse for much smuggling, as the Spanish colonists were very glad to have British goods, but the Spanish Government tried to check the abuses and serious "incidents" followed. The most famous was the removal of Captain Jenkins's ear (which, in actual fact, had probably been taken off in an English pillory!), and it was this incident which the Opposition in Parliament used to inflame public opinion against Spain. Walpole yielded to the clamour and declared war; as the bells rang out the news of war to rejoicing crowds he made the famous remark, "They are ringing the bells: they will soon be wringing their hands." His heart was not in the conflict, and three years later he was forced to resign. A long period of war had already opened, for the Anglo-Spanish war had been absorbed into another great European conflagration—the War of the Austrian Succession.

The occasion of this new conflict was the death without a male heir of the Habsburg Emperor Charles VI., ruler of

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

Austria, Hungary, Milan, and the Austrian Netherlands, and as "Holy Roman Emperor," titular overlord of Germany. Charles left a daughter, Maria Theresa, to succeed him, and all the enemies of the House of Habsburg saw in the accession of a woman an opportunity for reducing permanently the power of the Habsburgs. France and Spain moved to the attack, and Frederick the Great of Prussia seized Silesia. The object of the raiders was the dismemberment of Austria, France being determined that, at long last, the Austrian Netherlands should fall to her lot. Under these conditions neutrality was impossible for Britain. The collapse of the Habsburg power would leave France without a rival on the Continent, and with the Austrian Netherlands in their hands the French would be able to dominate all Europe. Britain therefore supported Maria Theresa, and when, in 1744, France opened an attack on the Netherlands, while preparing to support "Bonnie Prince Charlie" in a Jacobite invasion of England, it became clear that one more round in the long Anglo-French conflict was to be fought.

Once more European and colonial affairs were closely connected. Britain conquered French colonies, but lost Madras, and the French armies, who had a Marlborough in Marshal Saxe, overran the Austrian Netherlands and threatened an invasion of Holland. By the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 the conquests of both sides were restored; Britain had to surrender her gains in order to recover Madras and to free the Netherlands. But trade with the Spanish colonies was restored, and Britain therefore secured the object of the war of 1739.

The great importance of the Austrian Succession War, however, lies in the fact that it marked the beginning of the final stage in the Anglo-French colonial rivalry, which was now approaching a climax. If the Austrian Succession War had revealed the connection between European and colonial issues, the next great struggle, the Seven Years' War (1756-63), was to point the lesson even more clearly. In America a short period of uneasy peace followed the Peace of 1748, but in a few years the French were planning the complete extinction of British power in North America,

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

and war was resumed in 1754. The early years of the war saw a number of British reverses, but in 1759 General Wolfe captured Quebec, and North America was preserved for the English-speaking peoples. Similarly, in the East the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle brought no peace, and a struggle continued that gave Clive his opportunity of ensuring British supremacy in India. When peace was made at Paris in 1763 France surrendered to Britain Canada, Cape Breton Island, and various West Indian islands in America, together with Senegal in Africa, while she retained only a few trading-posts in India.

These great gains were the achievements of such men as Wolfe and Clive, but they owe as much to the genius of William Pitt the Elder (later Earl of Chatham), who directed the war from 1757 to 1761. Pitt realized, quite as much as any one has ever done in our history, that Britain could not hope to see the colonial struggle settled in her favour unless she was prepared to intervene actively on the Continent. He had complete confidence in his own ability ("I know that I can save this country and that no one else can," he is supposed to have said), and it was in part this confidence that enabled him to win the public support that was necessary for the success of his schemes. For the first time he showed the influence a man of vision could exercise over the British people, and it was this influence, combined with his thorough grasp of foreign, colonial, and military affairs, that crowned his policy with success. Pitt realized that the defeat of the French troops in North America could most easily be ensured if reinforcements could be prevented from arriving. He therefore encouraged the navy to win the command of the seas for Britain, and at the same time took advantage of the European situation to keep French armies engaged on the Continent. It was the success of this policy that justified his boast that he would conquer Canada in Germany.

The years from 1748 to 1756 had seen a gradual change in the international scene, resulting in what has well been called a "Diplomatic Revolution." During the War of the Austrian Succession Maria Theresa had been persuaded by Britain to acquiesce in Prussia's seizure of Silesia, but

COMMERCE AND COLONIES

she was determined upon revenge, and since Britain would not help her, turned to her old enemy, France, who was equally distrustful of the powerful new State that had arisen in North Germany. In consequence, Britain and Prussia tended to draw together, and it was Pitt who conceived the idea of supporting Frederick the Great with British money in order that he might keep the French busy in Europe. The advantages were mutual. British subsidies prevented Prussia from succumbing to the pressure of her enemies, and thereby helped Frederick to lay the foundations of the modern Germany that was to arise round Prussia, while Frederick's stubborn resistance to France, Austria, and Russia made it impossible for the French to save their colonies from capture by Britain. It was a great combination, and a decisive proof to Britain of the interconnection of foreign and colonial affairs. That the lesson was forgotten almost immediately after the signing of peace was a major factor in the loss of the American colonies twenty years later.

When peace was made in 1763 Pitt⁺ had been driven out of office by political intrigues, and the terms imposed on France were not as severe as he would have wished. Yet the gains were enormous, and the Peace of Paris saw Britain at the peak of her power and prosperity in the eighteenth century. Pitt's memorial in the London Guildhall records the gratitude of the merchants of the City for the man who had made commerce flourish by war. But success was not without its disadvantages. After the Peace Frederick the Great claimed that he had been betrayed, since the war had not been continued until he was prepared to make peace with his enemies, but as he was contemplating another attack on Austrian territory Britain was probably justified in calling a halt. Prussia's losses had been enormous, however, and Frederick must have felt that a peace settlement which, in return for some half million Prussian lives, did no more than secure him in Silesia while it gave Britain a vast overseas Empire, was not altogether just.

Power is not to be won without envy, and after 1763 Britain was without a friend in Europe. France, Spain, and Austria longed for revenge, and Frederick the Great

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

regarded Britain with disgust. The establishment of the first British Empire had led to isolation, and the new King, George III., was to learn that isolation was dangerous, and might even prove fatal. Britain's successes in the Spanish Succession and Seven Years' Wars had followed from a judicious combination of foreign and colonial policy. George III. and his ministers were to blunder in both.

CHAPTER IV

REBELLION, REVOLUTION, AND DICTATORSHIP, 1763-1806

PITT was unquestionably a great war minister, and the additions that were made to British territory under his direction place him among the greatest of our Empire builders. He had, too, a conception of the Empire that shows him to have been far in advance of his age. "I wish this to be an Empire of Freemen," he said once; "it will be the stronger for it, and the more easily governed. . . . The colonies are too great an object to be grasped but in the arms of affection." Yet the very greatness of his achievement created serious problems which his successors in office proved too small to solve.

In the first place, the cost of the Seven Years' War had been enormous. The National Debt, which had been begun in 1694 to meet the burden of the struggle with Louis XIV., had reached some seventy million pounds by 1756. It was more than doubled before 1763. Expanding trade made it possible for the country to bear this burden, but it was obvious that retrenchment would be necessary on the return of peace. Unfortunately one of the departments of State which suffered most from the economy "axe" was the navy, and no less than seventy-five ships were laid up. In view of Britain's isolation this was a most dangerous step, and it was actually to prove one of the contributory causes of the loss of the American colonies.

In the second place, the conquest of Canada had freed the American colonists from the French menace, and left them, in consequence, less dependent upon Britain. This fact encouraged their already well-developed spirit of independence and helped to create the unhappy conditions which made possible the later breach.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

We cannot concern ourselves here with the details of the quarrel that led in 1775 to the outbreak of what was really a civil war between Britain and the thirteen American colonies ; it is sufficient to say that a dispute arose over the raising of money for colonial defence. The dispute was badly handled on both sides, and the refusal of both to surrender principles led to a gradual and reluctant drift into war. Within twelve years of the end of the Seven Years' War Britain was faced with a rebellion in the colonies for whose protection that war had to a large extent been fought, and her enemies in Europe were not slow to take advantage of the fact. It was foreign intervention that decided the war in favour of the colonists, and helped to found the United States of America.

In Europe, after 1763, as we have said, Britain had no friend and sank into isolation. For a time foreign affairs ceased to be of importance, and the early years of the reign of George III. were, indeed, concerned mainly with domestic and colonial issues. In home affairs George III., though no dictator, was trying to turn back the clock to the years before 1714, when the sovereign was his own prime minister, and the constant changes of government that followed from this policy increased the reserved attitude of foreign States, and with it Britain's isolation. "The late frequent changes in England," wrote the British Minister to Prussia in 1767, "have created a degree of diffidence in foreign Powers which renders all negotiation with them difficult and disagreeable."¹ So little was Britain considered, indeed, that when in 1768 France bought Corsica from Genoa and proceeded to stamp out the resistance of the Corsicans under their heroic leader, Paoli, the British Government's protests were completely ignored. Paoli, who fled to England and became a friend of Dr. Johnson, was pensioned by George III., but the pension was the sole reply of Britain to a step that was intended to increase French power in the Mediterranean.

The irresolution of the Government is not sufficient to explain this great falling off from the heights to which Britain had attained by 1760. The accession of George III.

¹ *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i., p. 130.

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

in that year marks a stage in British history quite as clearly as the Peace of Paris brings to a close a period of European and colonial conflict. Britain at the end of the war was weary of a struggle that had been going on with only one short break for more than twenty years. A long breathing space was required in which the country could become accustomed to its Imperial greatness, while trade and industry settled down once more to the ways of peace. Pitt's fiery nature had raised the spirit of the country by a series of triumphant victories, but a country cannot remain at fever pitch for long ; a reaction must set in. That reaction came to England soon after the accession of George III., who was himself anxious to see the war brought to an end. The young men then entering upon political life were equally opposed to war, and were far more interested in the colonies than in Europe. Such a spirit would have led in any case to a turning away from Europe, but the tendency to isolation was enormously increased by the fact that since 1740 Britain had been pouring men and money into Europe, and especially into Germany. Few understood what Pitt had meant when he had said that he would conquer Canada in Germany ; few saw the justice of his remark that Hanover, the King's German Electorate, "ought to be as dear to us as Hampshire." To the unseeing eye it appeared that Canada had been won in Canada, even as it was to appear later that the Great War of 1914-18 had been won on the Western Front. Englishmen were alarmed at the cost of the war and failed to see the necessity for continuing a close connection with Europe. It seemed more reasonable to concentrate Britain's energies upon the Empire that had been won. It was not realized that such a policy, as events were to show, was the most direct way to the downfall of that Empire.

There was a further reason for an attitude of isolation. The Industrial Revolution, as it later came to be called, was in its early stages, and the progress of Britain towards her nineteenth-century position as the workshop of the world was just beginning. New industries were springing up, and new markets were being sought. The cotton

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

industry in particular was making rapid headway, and bringing widespread prosperity. Under these circumstances it is comprehensible that the ordinary Englishman should have lost interest in Europe. In Britain, wrote an American loyalist visitor in 1775, people were "at peace and contented, immersed in wealth and commerce, and caring little what passed beyond them."¹ But the King and his ministers should have had a wider outlook; that they saw little farther than their fellow-countrymen lays upon them a heavy burden of responsibility for what occurred.

Thus the outbreak of the colonial rebellion in 1775 found Britain isolated, her navy weak, and the country in general forgetful of Pitt's emphasis upon the interconnection of foreign and colonial policy. The war itself was hopelessly mismanaged by the Government, but the resistance of the colonists must in the end have been beaten down if they had not received assistance from Europe. In 1778, as a prominent American afterwards admitted, the situation was serious, as both food and war materials were lacking; French intervention came only just in time. Yet France could have done little to help if the British Navy had not been reduced in strength since 1763. It was the weakness of the navy which made it possible for the French to convey supplies of all kinds to America, and it was the fact that a French instead of a British fleet appeared at Yorktown in 1781 that compelled the surrender of General Cornwallis, the turning-point in the war. From the very beginning of the struggle practically every country in Europe did what it could to help the colonists. Frederick the Great tried to hinder the recruitment of Germans for the British Army, the Dutch conducted a very large contraband trade from their island of St. Eustatius in the West Indies, and France and Spain gave secret assistance. After the defeat of the British at Saratoga in 1777 this secret assistance broadened into open intervention, and in 1778 France entered the war against Britain, Spain following in the next year, while the Dutch were dragged in by the French in 1780. It was a time of humiliation for Britain, and the difficulties were not at first to diminish. Great

¹ Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, p. 296.

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

trouble was caused by Britain's determination to stop European trade with the colonists, and the enforcement of the right to stop and search neutral shipping led to many incidents. Russia went so far as to form a "League of Armed Neutrality" for the protection of neutral ships, and the idea was to be carried into effect again during the Napoleonic wars. With this "right of search" of neutral shipping is bound up the whole question of the freedom of the seas. Since her establishment as the supreme naval Power Britain has claimed the right to blockade an enemy, and has generally had the power to enforce the blockade. But the searching of neutral ships involved in the determination to prevent all war supplies from reaching the enemy has constantly led to serious incidents. In 1812 it brought about a war with the United States, and in the first three years of the Great War, before the United States joined the Allies, it caused much friction between the two countries. Since 1918, as we shall see later, the same insistence on the "right of search" has influenced our attitude to "sanctions," and has therefore had important repercussions. Here, then, is a direct link between 1780 and the present day.

The attempts to blockade the colonists, however, proved a heavy strain upon the navy, which had been severely reduced in strength by the economy "axe," and for the first time since the beginning of the century Britain lost the command of the seas. As she no longer had an ally in Europe to engage the French in a continental war the results were serious, and it was fortunate that the command was regained in the last year of the war in time to affect the peace terms. Peace was made in 1783, and by the Treaty of Versailles the American colonists gained recognition of their independence, while Britain lost some of her earlier conquests. France regained a few of her Seven Years' War losses, notably Senegal and some West Indian islands, and Minorca and Florida passed to Spain. The loss of Minorca was striking evidence of Britain's naval weakness, for although Gibraltar had been relieved after a three years' siege, no attempt had been made to save Minorca, and it was not until the capture of Malta in the

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

next war that our position in the Mediterranean once more became secure.

The moral of the American War was clear. Naval weakness and a misunderstanding of the principles of foreign policy had combined with an unhappy mishandling of the colonial dispute to drag Britain down from the triumphs of the Seven Years' War. The mistakes were not to be repeated, and it was fortunate for Britain that political conditions in these middle years of George III. brought into power after 1783 a young man who was to prove perhaps the greatest political genius this country has ever produced, William Pitt the Younger, second son of the great Chatham. Pitt took office in December 1783 at the age of twenty-four, and was destined to spend the greater part of his life in power. After 1783 he was out of office for only three years (1801-4) before his premature death, at the age of forty-six, in January 1806. His career falls into two parts, separated at the year 1793. In the first ten years he was the minister of peace, the rôle which he preferred and in which he shone. In this period he rebuilt the resources of Britain, which had been sadly strained by the American War, recovered by cautious steps our prestige in Europe, laid the foundations of a sound colonial policy, and by wise economic measures increased the prosperity of the country and encouraged the rapid development of the Industrial Revolution. But for this period of "Peace and Reconstruction," which he directed, Britain could hardly have emerged with increased power and prosperity from the strain of the twenty years of war that followed 1793. A comparison with France lends point to this view. The resources of France had been overstrained by the long wars with Britain, and it was the fact that the years of peace after 1783 were not used for economic recovery and financial reform that did much to render inevitable the explosion of the French Revolution in 1789.

Yet Pitt fully understood the dangers of isolation, and in the ten years of peace before 1793, while concentrating his main attention upon the encouragement of trade and industry and the solution of internal and colonial problems, he cautiously worked Britain back into the councils of

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

Europe, so that when, much against his will, the country was once more forced into war she was prepared to take up her old position. Pitt realized that, however great our interest in peace, there were certain European interests, particularly in the Netherlands, which Britain could not neglect. It was for this reason that he reluctantly accepted the French challenge in 1793.

Industrial, commercial, and colonial development, and a wary eye on events in Europe, especially as they affected the Netherlands—here is summed up much of British policy from Pitt's time onwards, and the lines were definitely marked out by Pitt himself. It is significant that he was the first British political leader to be recognized, by general agreement, as "Prime Minister." Modern constitutional practice, like almost every other branch of our political life, owes much to him. One branch that he did not neglect was that of defence. The importance of the navy was not lost upon him, and in spite of many other activities he gave a share of his attention from 1784 to increasing the strength and improving the administration of the fleet. The results of his work were to be seen in the series of later victories that culminated in Trafalgar and did much to carry Britain safely through the long contest with Napoleon.

Pitt's first opportunity to reassert Britain's position in Europe came in 1787, when a mild revolution in Holland gave him a chance to restore British influence in the Republic, which had been under French guidance for some years. The revolution was a matter of Dutch internal politics, but the successful party was pro-English in its sympathies and received much encouragement and secret assistance from the extremely able British Ambassador, Sir James Harris, afterwards Earl of Malmesbury. Pitt was cautious in his attitude, but by diplomatic pressure he checked any desire that France might have felt to interfere in Dutch affairs, while in co-operation with Prussia he helped on the overthrow of the pro-French party in Holland. It was a purely diplomatic victory for Britain, but it did much to restore her prestige in Europe, and it served as a reassertion of her interest in the Netherlands. Four years later Pitt met with a rebuff when he tried to check

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

the expansion of Russia at the expense of Turkey, for British commercial interests were opposed to any step which might have affected their valuable trade with Russia, and Britain was not yet prepared to fight for the integrity of Turkey. But in the following century, as we shall see, the protection of Turkey against the Russian advance was to be one of the main principles of British policy. Here again Pitt's policy looked into the future.

Pitt's most interesting venture in the realm of foreign affairs was the Commercial Treaty with France of 1786, designed to be advantageous to peace and commerce alike, and many who disapprove of the repressive measures which he introduced under the strain of the Revolution period would do well to bear in mind the words with which he supported the Treaty in the House of Commons :

To suppose that any nation is unalterably the enemy of another is weak and childish. It has its foundation neither in the experience of nations nor in the history of man. It is a libel on the constitution of political societies, and supposes the existence of diabolical malice in the original frame of man.

The attempt thus made to establish an Anglo-French *Entente* and to abolish ancient hostility was doomed to failure, but the denunciation of the view that England and France were necessarily traditional foes reveals the breadth of Pitt's outlook. After the storms of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, although mutual suspicion was slow in dying, the two countries were to discover that they had much in common. Once more Pitt's views proved prophetic.

To turn from the period before 1793 to the years of war that followed is to turn to the less successful part of Pitt's career. Unlike his father, he lacked the driving force of a "will to victory" that is necessary to a great war minister. His calm and resolution in the face of defeat and disappointment earned him the title of "the pilot that weathered the storm," but his aim at first was to make peace as soon as possible. It was not until after 1797, when France began her career of aggression, that he came to realize the im-

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

mentary of the struggle upon which Britain was engaged. After that he rejected all idea of compromise, and sought security only through victory, and it was his determination which fired the country to resist Napoleon to the bitter end. But Pitt lacked his father's taste for grandiose schemes, and he had no Frederick the Great to support him on the Continent. His greatest merit (and it was the quality he considered most essential to a statesman) was patience. In the early stages of the war he sent an army under the Duke of York ("the brave old Duke of York," who "had ten thousand men") to defend the Netherlands, but after the triumphant victories of the French, which left both the Austrian Netherlands and Holland under French control, he refused to send more British forces to the Continent. He preferred to rely on sea-power, cutting off France's overseas trade and capturing her colonies, while subsidizing with British money the other European Powers who were resisting the French. It was by means of this system of subsidies that he built up the three great Coalitions against France in 1793, 1798, and 1805. But the selfishness and incompetence of the Allies and the military superiority of the French wrecked all three Coalitions, and in the end left Britain, supreme at sea, to face a French Empire that had mastered all Europe. It was a struggle between a whale and an elephant; not until the Spanish rising against Napoleon in 1808 gave British troops once more a footing on the Continent could the opponents again come to grips, and five more years were to pass before a Fourth Coalition became possible.

Events, then, did not justify Pitt's view that the war could be brought to an early conclusion by attacks on French shipping and colonies and by subsidies to continental States. Yet, as soon as the horrors of the "Terror" (1793-94) were replaced by some more orderly system of government in France, Pitt was willing, and even anxious, to make peace. His speeches show that he had no desire before the outbreak of war to intervene in the internal affairs of France. In 1792, when the Revolution had already been in progress for nearly three years, he actually committed himself to the prophecy that Britain might

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

expect fifteen years of peace, and he refused to allow his political judgment to be swayed by the murder of Louis XVI. Public opinion in England was deeply affected by that event, but it was the French invasion of the Netherlands and the challenge to all existing governments that caused Pitt to agree to war.

Non-intervention, the preservation of peace, and, if peace could not be maintained, the protection of British interests—Pitt's policy might be summed up under these heads. In 1796, and again in 1797, he tried to come to terms with the new French Government, the Directory, and in the second negotiation he was even willing to leave the French in possession of the Southern Netherlands. But the military ambitions of the ruling group in Paris, fostered by the great successes of the French armies, made a settlement impossible. The year 1797 marked a turning-point in the history of the French Revolution. The dark days of the violence of the "Terror" had passed, but a group of extremists of another type now gained the upper hand, and instead of allowing France to settle down to consolidate the gains of the Revolution they launched her upon a career of expansion which brought a further eighteen years of war to Europe. The first fine ideals of the Revolution, already smirched by the violence of the "Terror," were now lost in an attempt to establish a great French military dictatorship in Europe, a dictatorship led by the man who, in 1804, was to make himself Emperor of the French, Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1797 Napoleon was only one of the generals of France, but his brilliant successes against Austria in Italy brought him rapidly forward. The end of the year 1799 saw him head of the French Government as "First Consul"; from that to the imperial crown was but a short step.

In the face of this attempt to revive Louis XIV.'s ambitions for the establishment of French supremacy in Europe Britain could not, in any case, have remained passive, but once more the interconnection between European and colonial affairs made inevitable British resistance to the French designs. After his defeat of Austria Napoleon realized that Britain was the main obstacle to these designs,

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

and from 1798 his life was spent in a great struggle with this country. As in earlier wars, the French discussed various schemes for grappling with the island enemy. The most obvious method lay in an invasion, and this was attempted in 1798 and again in 1805. A French force landed in Ireland in 1798, but was soon compelled to surrender, while a project for the invasion of England had to be abandoned on account of the British command of the seas. Seven years later the invasion scheme was revived, and Napoleon prepared at Boulogne a great fleet of transports to carry his troops across the Channel. Once more, however, the scheme had to be abandoned. The re-entry into the war of Austria diverted Napoleon's attention to Central Europe, and Nelson's victory at Trafalgar shattered the French fleet.

Even after Trafalgar, however, the idea was not dropped. Napoleon sought to make good his losses in ships by getting into his hands such of the fleets of Europe as were not already under his control, while at the same time he prepared Antwerp (the "pistol levelled at the heart of England") as a base for invasion. But Britain did not remain inactive in the face of this continued menace. In 1807 the Danes were compelled by an attack on Copenhagen to hand over their fleet to Britain, and in the same year the Portuguese Government was persuaded to withdraw with all its ships to the Portuguese colony of Brazil. Two fleets were thereby removed from Napoleon's grasp, and although an attack on Antwerp (the Walcheren Expedition of 1809) failed, the danger of invasion disappeared. Much has been written of the seizure of the Danish fleet, and the attack on a friendly State was, indeed, morally indefensible, but necessity knows no law, and it seems certain that, but for this extreme step, Napoleon would himself have taken the Danish ships. At his meeting with the Tsar Alexander I. of Russia at Tilsit in 1807 it had been arranged that Denmark and Portugal should be brought into alliance with France, and this decision was reported to the British Government by a secret agent. The attack on Copenhagen followed, and the Danish fleet was removed in good time, but the Portuguese fleet sailed only shortly

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

before the arrival of the French army sent to Lisbon to seize it.

Direct invasion, however, was not the only method of attacking England. Like Germany during the Great War, Napoleon realized that if her trade could be crippled Britain would soon be forced to her knees, and he adopted at different periods two methods of depriving Britain of her vital supplies. In 1798, inspired in part by an ambition to found a French Empire in the East, he planned an expedition against India in the hope of wresting from Britain one of the sources of her wealth. He had conquered Egypt as a step on the way, when Nelson's victory in Aboukir Bay (the "Battle of the Nile"), in August 1798, cut off his retreat and compelled him to return without his army in the following year. A British victory in the Mediterranean had, therefore, protected India, and from the battle of Aboukir until the present day the security of the Eastern Mediterranean has been one of Britain's major interests. The long defence of Turkey against Russia, and the close connection with Egypt that has now been maintained for nearly sixty years, are both indications of that interest, and recent events have tended to confirm its importance, which has been greater, of course, ever since the building of the Suez Canal, a direct road to India, in the eighteen-sixties.

After his return from Egypt in 1799 Napoleon's concentration upon European affairs prevented a revival of the Indian project, but it does not seem to have passed altogether from his mind. In 1805, when he was preparing for the invasion of England, he assumed that the success of the invasion was certain, and boasted that, in consequence, "the Indies are ours when we want to take them." In other words, he, too, saw how closely Britain's position in Europe was connected with her colonial interests; a conquered England would have provided rich spoils for the French Empire.

If direct attacks upon Britain and her overseas possessions could not succeed, there was yet another possibility—British trade with the Continent might be cut off. It was with this end in view that Napoleon initiated the "Continental System" with his "Berlin Decrees" of 1806. Trade

REVOLUTION AND DICTATORSHIP

between Britain and the rest of Europe was forbidden, and the most vigorous efforts were made to enforce the ban. It was a step that can only be compared with the unrestricted submarine warfare introduced by Germany in 1917 in an attempt to break Britain's resistance by depriving her of her vital imports. In both cases there was a direct attack upon British trade, an attack which for a time met with not a little success. Of this "Continental System" and its results, however, we must speak in the next chapter.

Pitt did not live to see the climax of the great struggle between his country and Napoleon. After the failure of his peace negotiations in 1797 he built up a second Coalition of Powers against France, only to see it shattered by the French armies in 1800. In the following year came the Union between Britain and Ireland, and George III.'s refusal of Pitt's demand that the Union should be followed by the grant of political rights to the Irish Catholics led to Pitt's resignation. With the great statesman out of office a peace of exhaustion was made with France in 1802, but it proved of short duration. War was renewed in 1803, and the May of 1804, which saw Napoleon proclaimed Emperor, saw also the return of Pitt to office. Henceforth the war was a duel between the two men, carried on, after Pitt's death in 1806, by his pupils. Some years earlier Pitt had defined Britain's supreme war aim as Security—"security against a danger the greatest that ever threatened the world"—and in the last months of his life he sketched the conditions on which a secure peace might be based. As we shall see in the next chapter, it was his pupil, Lord Castlereagh, who developed these conditions and incorporated them in the great Peace Treaty that finally ended the war.

But nearly ten years before peace was made Pitt had passed away. At the Guildhall Banquet in November 1805 he had been toasted as "The Saviour of Europe." His speech in reply to the toast consisted only of these words :

I return you many thanks for the honour you have done me. But Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Two months later he was dead, but his confidence was to prove justified. Britain, strengthened by Pitt's constructive work in the years of peace, continued the struggle with Napoleon until his fall, resisting the attempt at a military domination of Europe as she was to resist it again in 1914. The lesson of the Napoleonic Wars, as of the Great War, is clear—that there must be room in Europe for the free development of all peoples. Any attempt to challenge this right has drawn Britain into European struggles in the past ; it must inevitably draw her in again in the future if the lessons of the past are ignored.

CHAPTER V

CASTLEREAGH AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE, 1812-22

ON the death of Pitt a new Ministry was formed in Britain, a Coalition Government (we should call it to-day a National Government) which rejoiced in the name of the "Ministry of All the Talents." The Foreign Secretary was Charles James Fox, the brilliant but erratic genius who had so long led Radical opinion in the country. Fox had been arguing ever since 1793 that the war with France was both unnecessary and unjust, and in view of Napoleon's recent defeat of Britain's ally, Austria, he now tried to make peace. But with all his dislike of the war Fox found it impossible to come to terms with Napoleon. Difficulties arose over the possession of Sicily, which Britain was holding for the protection of her Mediterranean trade, and Fox became convinced that Napoleon was not acting with sincerity. "It is not so much the value of the point in dispute," he complained, "as the manner in which the French fly from their word, that disheartens me. It is not Sicily but the shuffling, insincere way in which they act, that shows me they are playing a false game."¹ The breakdown of the negotiations followed, and the war dragged on. Fox, like Pitt before him, had been convinced by experience that peace was impossible until French ambitions had been curbed.

Yet the situation for Britain was gloomy indeed. Napoleon was at the height of his power; his armies held for him all Europe between Spain and Russia, and the kings and princes of the Continent cringed before him. Pitt's last great scheme of alliances, the Third Coalition, had been broken by the French armies, and by 1807

¹ Lascelles, *The Life of Charles James Fox*, p. 323.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Napoleon had not an enemy upon the Continent. At the Conference at Tilsit in that year he met the Tsar of Russia, Alexander I., as an equal, and the two men talked of dividing the world between them. Within a short time Napoleon had redrawn the map of Europe, and Britain alone continued to evade the wide sweep of his ambitious schemes. Napoleon himself was Emperor of the French, his Empire including the Netherlands and parts of Germany, Italy and the Balkans, as well as France itself. For his brothers he carved out dominions in various parts of Europe. To Joseph he gave first Naples, then Spain; to Louis, for a few years, Holland; to Jerome a Kingdom in Germany; while his sister's husband, Murat, took the Kingdom of Naples when Joseph was transferred to Spain. Western Germany was organized into a Confederation of the Rhine under Napoleon's protection, Northern Italy into a Kingdom of Italy under his own rule. Prussia and Austria were humble allies; Russia was a powerful friend. So great indeed was Napoleon's authority that in 1806 he was able to abolish the thousand-year-old "Holy Roman Empire," which had long ceased to be in fact more than a grandiose fiction. The last of the Holy Roman Emperors, the Habsburg Francis II., having lost all three of his wars with Napoleon, accepted the abolition of his ancient dignity and consoled himself with the title of Emperor of Austria as Francis I.

Yet Britain still remained an implacable enemy, and it was after the breakdown of the peace negotiations of 1806 that Napoleon made his great attempt to overcome her resistance by stifling the trade of the "nation of shopkeepers." With the greater part of Europe under the control of French bayonets it seemed possible to enforce the ban on trade between the Continent and Britain, and the ruthless application of this "Continental System," though it caused a great deal of distress, especially in Germany, did for a time affect British exports. A certain amount of smuggling, however, eluded the vigilance of the customs officials, and after the Spanish revolt against Napoleon Britain found new markets for her exports in Spain and the Spanish colonies; the close commercial

CASTLEREAGH

connection that has long existed between Britain and South America began at this period. In Europe the "Continental System" stimulated the invention of such substitute products as beet sugar, but in the end it added considerably to Napoleon's difficulties. Like some of his modern imitators, who also aim at "self-sufficiency," Napoleon wished to make commerce "manœuvre like a regiment" as an instrument of his policy; actually he did but hasten his own downfall. To be effective, the system had to be enforced throughout Europe, but the widespread interference that followed caused general resentment, especially when, as in Germany, it was associated with foreign oppression. The attempt to force Spain and Portugal into the scheme led to the Spanish national rising of 1808, and two years later Tsar Alexander I., who had been induced to lend his support, found himself compelled to lift the ban on British goods, which were essential to Russia. To force Alexander back into the "Continental System," Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, hoping to "conquer London in Moscow." It was an unavoidable step, for every loophole through which British trade might pass into Europe had to be stopped. Yet many of the troops who marched with Napoleon wore coats of British cloth; so ineffective was the "System."

The invasion of Russia was to prove fatal to Napoleon's ambitions, but the Spanish rising had already marked the beginning of the end. The Emperor never appreciated the opposition to foreign intervention in Spanish affairs that underlay the rising, and completely underestimated the strength of the Spanish resistance, while he did not see that for Britain the Spanish war was of the greatest importance, as it gave her a footing on the Continent. After Pitt's death the policy of subsidizing allied Kings and princes had been abandoned, and Britain had waited for the revolt of a *people* against the French dictatorship. The revolt came in 1808, and it was British military assistance that turned the guerrilla tactics of the Spaniards into the Peninsular War, which for five years kept a French army tied up in Spain. In spite of the superior numbers of the French, the British commander, Arthur Wellesley, who was

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

created Duke of Wellington for his services, gradually expelled Napoleon's troops from the Peninsula, and at the end of 1813 was able to cross the Pyrenees and carry the war into France.

Meanwhile Napoleon had invaded Russia in the summer of 1812, and soon found that he had at last overreached himself. His occupation of Moscow failed to break the Russian resistance, and in October he had to order a retreat. There followed, in all the bitterness of the Russian winter, the terrible Retreat from Moscow. Nearly 700,000 men, drawn from all parts of Napoleon's dominions, and less than half of them French, had marched into Russia. Of these some 250,000 perished in the course of the campaign, and only about 100,000 returned with Napoleon. It was an appalling disaster, and one that brought new hope to the peoples oppressed by the Napoleonic dictatorship. In Germany a great national rising against the French broke out in 1813, a "War of Liberation," inspired by that spirit of ardent patriotism which in our own day has created National-Socialism. Prussia, which had suffered greatly at Napoleon's hands, placed itself at the head of this nationalist movement, and in alliance with Russia and Austria drove Napoleon back across the Rhine, invading France from the east shortly after Wellington had entered it from the south. The wheel had come full circle: Napoleon's attempt to dominate all Europe had ended in an invasion of France. A brilliant defensive campaign failed to stave off the inevitable doom, and the last chapter closed when Napoleon signed his abdication in April 1814. Waterloo was but the epilogue.

Yet the collapse, when it came, took most of Europe by surprise. Napoleon's prestige at the end was far greater than his military resources, and the memory of many defeats prevented the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian armies from taking full advantage of their superiority in numbers. Each of the three rulers, Francis I. of Austria, Frederick William III. of Prussia, and Alexander I. of Russia, was unwilling at first to run the risks involved in a continuance of the war if he could make an advantageous peace with Napoleon; each would come to terms with the

CASTLEREAGH

enemy if his own particular objectives could be gained. Some unifying force was needed which could bring these rulers to put the security of Europe before their own divergent interests, and that force was provided by Britain. Britain in 1814 held the position in the councils of Europe that the United States of America held in 1919. Alone among the Powers she possessed the resources for continuing the struggle against Napoleon. Her strength was unbroken by twenty years of war, her fleet outnumbered the navies of all the rest of Europe combined, and her financial resources were sufficient to support the continental states in bringing the war to a close. In addition, the colonial possessions of France and of France's unwilling ally, Holland, were completely in her hands. At this moment Britain was indeed the arbiter of Europe, and she did not fail to rise to her responsibilities. That she did so, however, was due to the influence and abilities of one man, her Foreign Secretary, Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh (later second Marquess of Londonderry). It was fortunate for Britain and for Europe that at this critical time the British Foreign Secretary should have been a man who combined great diplomatic gifts with sound common sense and high ideals, and who, while retaining the confidence of Parliament and his colleagues in the Government, should have been able to win the trust and good opinion of continental statesmen. In the first weeks of 1814 Castlereagh, realizing the necessity for unified counsels among the Allies, crossed to the Continent and travelled to Allied Headquarters with the definite object of welding the four Powers—Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia—into a solid alliance against Napoleon. But he had in mind something more than the formation of an alliance for ending the war; he was already working his way towards the conception of international unity by conference which was to be his greatest contribution to the history of European peace. He realized, as he himself said, that in "an habitual, confidential and free intercourse between the ministers of the great Powers as a body"¹ lay the best means for removing divergencies of policy and ensuring a united

¹ *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i., p. 433.
(4,738)

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

effort for victory and peace. Experience was to strengthen him in this opinion. During the period of nearly two years that followed his arrival on the Continent he was to spend most of his time with the Kings and ministers of the other Powers while the affairs of Europe were being resettled, and the great Peace Settlement of 1814-15 arose from the long and open discussions that were held in this period. It was a great experiment in international co-operation, and it encouraged Castlereagh to press his ideas to their logical conclusion. If the statesmen of Europe could meet and arrange a Coalition to end a war, and if, further, they could continue their co-operation into the Peace Conferences that followed the war, would it not be possible to revive that co-operation whenever any serious European problem arose? Could not another Conference be arranged immediately in any time of crisis, so that a settlement could be reached by international co-operation *before* war could break out? That was Castlereagh's final idea—to carry the methods of war into peace; to adopt, in times of peace, the system of co-operation that had hitherto been used only in war, and to use it so that war might never again devastate Europe. This idea of "diplomacy by conference" seems to us now an obvious one. But in our own day we have not yet succeeded in putting it thoroughly into practice, and in Castlereagh's time, of course, it was nothing short of revolutionary. By this one plan alone—based, be it remembered, as much upon experience as upon idealism—Castlereagh is stamped as one of the great peacemakers of history.

Castlereagh's first task on the Continent was to unite the Allies into a fourth Coalition against France, and his diplomatic skill, with the effective backing of British gold, achieved that object within two months. By the Treaty of Chaumont of March 1814 the four Powers pledged themselves to continue the war until France accepted peace, each of them providing large armies and Britain supplying, in addition, subsidies of five million pounds a year. Furthermore, the alliance was to remain effective for twenty years, and during that time the Allies were to defend Europe against any attempt by France to upset the terms of the

CASTLEREAGH

Peace Settlement. This last clause of the Treaty was based upon the peace terms which Pitt had sketched during negotiations with the Tsar Alexander before the formation of the third Coalition in 1805. Pitt had proposed that, when France was defeated, her frontiers should be reduced to their positions in the early stages of the French Revolution, and that she should be restrained for the future by the creation of strong "buffer" States in the Netherlands, on the Rhine, and in Italy, while this settlement should be protected by a mutual guarantee among the victorious Powers of the security of each other's territory. Castlereagh had had a hand in the drafting of this programme in 1805, and he kept its provisions in mind when, at long last, the war came to an end nine years later. Hence the arrangements made at Chaumont for a twenty years' guarantee. Actually, Castlereagh wished this guarantee to be effective against any State which disturbed the peace of Europe, and not merely against France, and although he failed to carry the point at the moment he was able, as we shall see, to incorporate it in the final Treaties of Peace.

The signing of the Treaty of Chaumont was followed within a month by the abdication of Napoleon, and peace negotiations were immediately opened in Paris. The first stages of the Peace Settlement were arranged there, and the rest were dealt with at Vienna, where the final Treaty was signed in November 1815, five months after Waterloo. In the arrangement of the terms of peace Castlereagh played an important part, and his efforts to reach a settlement of lasting value were well supported by his colleague, Wellington (who, like many other great soldiers, hated war), by the Austrian Chancellor, Metternich, and by the Tsar. Alexander I. was a man of ideals, who regarded himself as an Apostle of Peace, and, although his instability of character (which was later to verge on insanity) caused difficulties after 1815, his zeal for a moderate peace settlement gave him, equally with Castlereagh, the credit for much that was good in the Peace Treaties. In particular, the two men were determined that France should not be treated harshly. "It is not our business to collect trophies," said Castlereagh, "but to bring back the world

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

to peaceful habits." He enlarged upon this wise view in a dispatch to the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool, and showed himself strongly opposed to taking from France any territory which one day, and with some show of justice, she might attempt to recover by force : ¹

The more I reflect upon it, the more I deprecate this system of scratching such a Power. We may hold her down and pare her nails so that many years shall pass away before she can again wound us . . . but this system of being pledged to a continental war for objects that France may any day reclaim from the particular states that hold them, without pushing her demands beyond what she would contend was due to her own honour, is, I am sure, a bad British policy.

The modern parallel is clear. France settled down under the Vienna Settlement mainly because its provisions were just. She had kept Europe in a state of war for more than twenty years ; yet she was treated with amazing moderation. Most of her conquests were taken from her, but she was allowed to retain some slight extensions of her northern and eastern frontiers. Of her colonies she lost only Mauritius, Tobago, and St. Lucia, even her commercial posts in India being left in her possession. No war indemnity was imposed, and she was allowed to retain the art treasures which she had plundered from her defeated enemies. In her internal affairs every chance was given to her for future peaceful development. The Bourbon dynasty was restored in the person of Louis XVIII., brother of the murdered Louis XVI., but the new King was compelled to grant to his people a charter promising constitutional government. It was hoped that the moderation of the Peace would ensure popularity for the restored Bourbons, and here the conduct of the Allies of 1814 contrasts most favourably with the attitude adopted at Paris in 1919, when the new German Republic was treated as severely as if it had been the Empire of William II.

Even after Napoleon's return, and the final Allied victory at Waterloo, the terms of peace were not stiffened too severely. The small territorial concessions made in 1814

¹ *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i., p. 511.

CASTLEREAGH

were withdrawn, and the captured art treasures were restored to their owners, while a war indemnity and an army of occupation were imposed upon France. But this army was withdrawn in 1818, and France was then admitted as an equal among the Great Powers. She never again became a menace to Europe.

In accordance with Pitt's policy, however, precautionary measures were taken, and "buffers" were placed around France. Austria acquired Northern Italy, Prussia was given German territory on the Rhine, and Belgium (as we may now begin to call the old Southern Netherlands) was united with Holland to form the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The reunion of the two parts of the Netherlands, which had been separated for two centuries, was mainly the work of Britain, and was intended to secure them against any future French attack. Once more the vital British interest in the Low Countries had been displayed, and as the French attack on them had been the cause of Britain's original entry into the war in 1793, so their security was one of the chief British gains by the Peace. In view of the strength of the new Kingdom, which was well able to protect itself and its possessions against France, most of the old Dutch colonies were restored, only Cape Colony, Ceylon, and part of Guiana being retained by Britain. By way of compensation for the Cape Britain gave the Dutch Government two million pounds, to be spent on fortifications for the protection of its frontiers. It was, perhaps, hardly a fair bargain for the Dutch, but the return of their other valuable colonies is usually overlooked by those who claim that Britain's colonial history has been one of unmitigated greed. Pitt had long before defined Britain's war aims under the single heading of "Security," and it was security that Britain sought by the Vienna Settlement. The integrity of the Netherlands was assured, and Britain's other gains were intended to guard trade routes and her communications with her overseas possessions: the Cape and Mauritius secured the route to India, Malta provided a naval base in the Mediterranean, and Tobago with St. Lucia gave security in the West Indies. Britain had spent enormous sums of money on the wars, and had paid in

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

loans and subsidies more than fifty-seven million pounds, of which only two and a half millions were ever returned.¹ But her trade was expanding rapidly and she had gained the security which made possible the tremendous developments in the British Empire during the nineteenth century.

Throughout the long and complicated negotiations which took place at Paris and Vienna Castlereagh did not lose sight of his ideal of international co-operation, and he gained an opportunity for putting it into practice when the sixth article of the final Treaty of November 1815 was being discussed. In its original form this article merely stated that the statesmen of Europe should meet at intervals to discuss the affairs of France. This suggestion did not satisfy Castlereagh, and it was he who gave the article a broader scope :

To facilitate and to secure the execution of the present Treaty, and to consolidate the connections, which at the present moment so closely unite the 4 sovereigns² for the happiness of the World, the High Contracting Parties³ have agreed to renew their meetings at fixed periods, either under the immediate auspices of the Sovereigns themselves, or by their respective Ministers, for the purpose of consulting upon their common interests, and for the consideration of the measures which at each of those periods shall be considered the most salutary for the repose and prosperity of Nations and for the maintenance of the Peace of Europe.

This was Castlereagh's great contribution to European peace, and it is not too much to see in it the first draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations. It was certainly the basis of the so-called "Concert of Europe" which was to maintain some form of international understanding during the nineteenth century. Castlereagh hoped that all problems affecting the peace of Europe would be discussed, as they arose, at the Conferences summoned under Article Six; peace would thereby be maintained, for no critical situation would have time to develop. Two things were necessary, however, if these far-reaching plans were to be

¹ Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, vol. i., p. 318.

² i.e. George III., Francis I., Frederick William III., and Alexander I.

³ i.e. Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia.

CASTLEREAGH

fulfilled. Europe must learn the value of "diplomacy by conference," and must be prepared to use this new diplomatic machinery for the common good, and not merely for selfish ends. Furthermore, as Castlereagh clearly understood, Britain must be prepared to exercise in time of peace the influence that had been hers during the wars; without British co-operation the scheme could not succeed. But after 1815—as after 1919—neither of these important conditions was fulfilled. Of disinterested zeal for international co-operation there was very little, and Britain's allies soon turned the conference system into a means of frustrating revolutionary movements. The downfall of Napoleon had not removed from the minds of the rulers of Europe the memory of the "Terror," and of Napoleon's aggressive designs, which had sprung out of the Revolution. Consequently a period of reaction followed 1814, a period in which every movement for freedom, however mild, was regarded as the precursor of the horrors of another Revolution, even as to-day the slightest leaning towards Democracy is considered in several countries to be a manifestation of the "Bolshevik bogey." It was in the years after 1815 that the word "Liberal" was first coined in Spain to describe those who were struggling for liberty, but it was the word "Revolution"—with a big capital "R"—which was in the thoughts of European statesmen. It was, perhaps, a natural tendency, though a deplorable one, but it was one of the main reasons for the collapse of Castlereagh's hopes. In September 1815 Alexander I., whose mind was now being affected by religious mania, put forward the proposal that the sovereigns of Europe should agree to conduct their affairs—their relations with their subjects and with each other—on the basis of Christian principles. Castlereagh characterized the idea as "this piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense," and frankly told Lord Liverpool that the Tsar's mind was not "completely sound."¹ His dislike of the scheme was fully justified when, within a few years, this "Holy Alliance" turned itself into a crusade against Liberalism led by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Castlereagh himself had no

¹ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-15*, p. 482.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

sympathy with Liberalism, but he detested the idea of intervention in another country's domestic problems. When, therefore, the Holy Alliance declared itself on the side of tyranny against the revolts that broke out in Spain and Italy in 1820-21, a cleavage between Britain and the other Powers became apparent.

The cleavage was increased by developments in Britain. Few Englishmen shared Castlereagh's zeal for international co-operation, and many considered that he was drawing Britain into too close a connection with the Continent. The wars being over, Britain tended to turn her back on Europe and to concentrate upon industrial and commercial expansion. Nor did Castlereagh possess either the desire or the ability to convince public opinion of the value of his work. To public approval he was indifferent, and he was never an inspired speaker. As the most notable member of the Government, too, he was popularly credited with all the reactionary measures passed by the Government after 1815, while his close association with foreign enemies of Liberalism earned him the reputation of a monster of tyranny. Shelley, in the depths of his ignorance, summed up more extreme opinion in these lines from his *Masque of Anarchy* (1817) :

I met Murder on the way :
He had a mask like Castlereagh,—
Very smooth he looked, yet grim,
Seven bloodhounds followed him !
All were fat, and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one and two by two
He tossed them human hearts to chew.¹

Like most of his contemporaries, Shelley did not realize the vast distinction between the Holy Alliance and Castlereagh's ideal of international co-operation. Indeed, it is only in recent years that historical research has revealed the distinction, and with it the greatness of Castlereagh. Such is the fate of the pioneers of Peace.

Four Conferences were held under the terms of Castlereagh's Article Six, those of Aachen (1818), Troppau

¹ Marriott, *Castlereagh*, p. 5.

CASTLEREAGH

(1820), Laibach (1821), and Verona (1822). The first three gradually revealed the split between Britain and the Continent ; before the fourth, Castlereagh, worn out by ten years of ceaseless labour, had taken his life. His great schemes had failed, and were being utilized by others for narrow and selfish ends. Before his tired brain gave out he knew that he had failed, though he was still struggling for success. " No one after me understands the affairs of the Continent," he cried in despair only a few days before the last tragic act. It is a cry from the heart which touches us deeply to-day, for we are struggling with the very problems which Castlereagh strove to solve. With the experience of the post-War years behind us we can do justice to his achievements and his ideals, and the best tributes to his memory have been paid by those historians who have mastered the details of his work. He has well been described as " the most European Foreign Minister in (Britain's) history,"¹ and as " one of the very greatest, and most constructive, of British Foreign Secretaries." ²

In spite of apparent failure Castlereagh had not done his work in vain ; some portion of his achievement remained to point the way to future development. His legacy of ideas to Britain and to Europe might be summed up briefly in the following points—that a peace treaty, to be successful, should be just and moderate ; that both as an ideal and as sound practice international co-operation was an aim to be achieved ; that Britain should play her part in European affairs. Above all, as the greatest authority on Castlereagh, Professor Webster, has pointed out, " Castlereagh had learnt the great lesson that if he wished to avoid war he must prepare for peace." ³ The World, it would seem, has still to learn that lesson.

¹ Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812-15*, p. 3.

² Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe, 1789-1914*, p. 65.

³ Webster, *The European Alliance, 1815-25*, p. 33.

CHAPTER VI

CANNING AND THE BASES OF BRITISH POLICY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, 1822-27

CASTLEREAGH's successor at the Foreign Office was George Canning, a man of origins not far short of humble, who had made his way by his wits, aided by the Eton and Oxford education which had been provided by the generosity of an uncle. Like Castlereagh, Canning had been a friend and pupil of Pitt, but since Pitt's death the two men had been bitter rivals, the bitterness being rather on Canning's side. In outlook the two were strongly contrasted. Castlereagh was an aristocrat, cool and practical in his judgment, and swayed by a desire to protect Britain's greatest interest, Peace, by drawing his country with the other Powers into a close international understanding. But his policy depended to a very large extent upon his personality, and on his remarkable influence over the statesmen of the Continent. Canning believed no less in the necessity for peace, but he did not believe that it could be achieved through co-operation. Britain, he maintained, should not concern herself with Europe except in times of serious crisis, when her intervention was necessary as much for the defence of her own interests as for the restraint of aggression. Then she should intervene forcefully and decisively. But in normal times she should concentrate upon her own affairs, developing and protecting her trade and guarding herself against interference behind the stout walls of her warships. Canning's policy, then, was more narrowly nationalist than Castlereagh's. "For *Europe*," he said on taking office, "I shall be desirous now and then to read *England*," and he summed up his creed in the motto, "Every nation for itself and God for us all,"

which, as one historian has justly said, has as its corollary, "Devil take the hindmost."¹

But, whatever the limitations of his policy, Canning was much more in accord with the spirit of his age than Castlereagh had been. "Damn all foreign countries," said a country elector to the young Gladstone in 1831. "What has old England to do with foreign countries?"² and the remark is characteristic of the Englishman's attitude to foreign affairs throughout the nineteenth century. Britain, intent upon industrial and commercial expansion, was not greatly interested in international politics, and only realized spasmodically that there was a Europe. With Liberal movements abroad and with the victims of oppression the Englishman would sympathize, and he would demand that the British Government should do something to make his sympathy effective, though he was not willing to go to the length of war except, as in the Crimean War (1854-56), when some real or imagined harm was threatened to British interests. Her naval power made it possible for Britain to intervene, as she frequently did, without risk of war, and this encouraged in Englishmen an attitude not only of aloofness but also of superiority. Britain's industrial progress, her growing wealth, her vaunted Constitution (which increased in Liberalism as the century wore on), her colonial development, and her naval strength, all combined to raise this spirit of superiority until, in the middle of the second half of the century, it became that exaggerated blend of Nationalism and Imperialism which we know as "Jingoism." It needed the salutary blood-letting of the Boer War and the complete change in the European situation caused by the rise of Germany to teach Englishmen once more the closeness of their connection with the Continent. Not until the Great War was there any revival of Castlereagh's idea that Britain should take the lead in securing international peace by international co-operation. Canning summed up the feelings of many nineteenth-century Englishmen on this point when he said, "Let us not, in the foolish spirit of romance, suppose that we

¹ Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 66.

² Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. 1., p. 72.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

alone could regenerate Europe." In the five short years of power that were given to him after Castlereagh's death Canning turned his back on any policy of regeneration, and by his masterly conduct of foreign policy indicated the lines on which British policy was to run for the next half-century.

Two years before his death Castlereagh had realized that the Holy Alliance was moving away from his ideal of co-operation, but whereas he was striving, up to the last, to repair the breach between Britain and the continental Powers, Canning welcomed the breach and hastened to widen it. In 1820 Castlereagh embodied his views in a great State Paper, which was afterwards used by Canning as the basis of his own policy. The occasion for the Paper was the outbreak of a military revolution in Spain against the 'erocious tyranny of Ferdinand VII., one of the worst Kings who has ever sat on a throne, and a man who combined the conduct of a bandit with the appearance (as Goya's revealing portrait shows) of a gorilla. The movement was a "Liberal" one, a demand for the abolition of Ferdinand's dictatorship and for the restoration of the Constitution which had been drawn up in 1812, at the height of the struggle with Napoleon. For us to-day the revolt has a tragic interest, since it marked the first stage in the long struggle for liberty which has been going on at intervals in Spain ever since, and which is still far from ended. In the Constitution of 1812 and the revolt of 1820, in fact, can be found the origins of the Civil War that has desolated Spain in our own day.

Then, as now, Britain's policy was one of "non-intervention." In the State Paper, which was circulated to the chief Governments of Europe, Castlereagh pointed out that "the Spanish Nation is, of all the European People, that which will least brook any interference from abroad." This opinion was based upon the views of Wellington, who had good reason, from his Peninsular War experience, to claim to be an authority on the Spanish character. But this was not the main ground upon which Castlereagh based his claim for non-intervention. The Holy Alliance Powers wished to intervene in Spain to restore Ferdinand VII.'s

authority, and Castlereagh tried to deter them by recalling the origins of the Four-Power Alliance which had been established by Article Six of the Treaty of 1815. That Alliance had been intended to serve as a protection for the Peace Settlement, not "as an Union for the Government of the World, or for the Superintendence of the Internal Affairs of other States," and nothing, Castlereagh added, "is more likely to impair, or even to destroy its real utility, than any attempt to push its duties and its obligations beyond the Sphere which its original conception and understood Principles will warrant." Here was a criticism of the Holy Alliance's misuse of Article Six. As for British policy, Castlereagh summed it up by saying that Britain could not agree to foreign intervention on behalf of a King who had behaved so badly, while she saw no reason to suppose that the Spanish revolt would lead to a revival of revolution and war in Europe. "We shall be found in our Place when actual danger menaces the System of Europe," he said, "but this Country cannot, and will not, act upon abstract and speculative Principles of Precaution." Britain, in other words, would defend the peace of Europe against any real danger, but would not follow her Allies against any imaginary menace, or when their motive was defence of tyranny rather than of peace.

Castlereagh did not intend by this firm statement of policy to draw Britain away from the 1815 Alliance; he sought, rather, to restrict the work of the Alliance to its original and proper function, so that Britain might play her part in it without the risk of intervention in the internal affairs of another country. Europe was now becoming the battleground of the rival principles of Liberalism and Monarchist Dictatorship. In Castlereagh's view the British system offered a third alternative, even as it does to-day, and Britain could not intervene actively on either side, unless the course of events threatened her security, and with it the peace of Europe as a whole.

With the State Paper of 1820 to support him, Castlereagh was preparing, just before he died, to attend the Conference at Verona, where the Spanish situation was to be discussed. Spain herself did not provide the only problem. Her Ameri-

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

can colonies were in revolt, and British traders were demanding that the independence of the colonies should be recognized so that commercial relations could be established on a regular footing. Castlereagh was fully alive to the situation, and was actually preparing a scheme of recognition when he ended his life. It was left to his successor to put the scheme, with his own variations, into practice.

Canning, on taking office, took the State Paper as the basis of his policy, but gave it a characteristic twist. He accepted the breach between Britain and her Allies and did not attempt to remedy it. "We shall have no more Congresses, thank God," was his ejaculation, and Castlereagh's vision of co-operation, already dim, rapidly faded away. There was a further reason for Canning's dislike of co-operation with the Holy Alliance Powers. He was proud of his country's institutions, and believed that other countries would benefit by the introduction of Constitutions on the British plan. Representative institutions that had steered Britain safely through the long wars deserved, in his view, to become "the models of Europe." It was for this reason that he disliked seeing the Holy Alliance crushing out Liberal movements abroad, and in the end his determination to preserve "Non-intervention" led him very near to intervening on the side of Liberalism. This aspect of his policy was afterwards continued and developed, with great gusto, by Palmerston.

Canning's first problem was that of Spain. Early in 1823 a French army invaded Spain and stamped out the revolutionary movement, leaving Ferdinand VII. to exact a terrible vengeance from the defeated Liberals. The French commander, the Duke of Angoulême, tried to restrain the King, but soon realized that foreigners could hope to have no permanent influence on developments in Spain. "Ferdinand would make me a hundred promises," the Duke wrote in disgust, "but would not keep them the moment I turned my back. . . . We might stay ten years in Spain, but at the end the parties would begin to massacre each other again."¹ In the face of this flagrant

¹ Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 83.

intervention Canning took a strong line. It was impossible for Britain to check the French without open war, and Canning, like Castlereagh, did not believe that Britain would be threatened by events in Spain itself. But what if the French, after subduing the Spanish rebels, should cross the Atlantic and endeavour to restore to Ferdinand his lost colonies? This Canning was determined to prevent, for the British fleet could stop the French without risk of war. Accordingly he adopted a high tone in his speeches. "I resolved," he declared later, "that if France had Spain, it should not be Spain with the Indies," and he hurried on the recognition of the new South American States which Castlereagh had been more cautiously preparing. Thus, at one stroke, British commerce was protected, the revolted colonies were freed from the danger of a French attack, and the principles of the Holy Alliance were flouted. "I called the New World into existence," Canning claimed a few years later, "to redress the Balance of the Old." The claim was not unjustified, for although the Spanish colonies had won their own independence, it was British sea-power which protected them from interference. In the face of a threat of naval action by Britain the French did not dare to carry their crusading arms beyond Spain itself. Yet not a single British battleship had moved: the mere threat had been sufficient.

Canning's firm handling of the situation had one important repercussion, for it led in the United States to the declaration of policy associated with the name of President Monroe. The "Monroe Doctrine" proclaimed that any interference by European Powers with South America would be regarded by the United States as an unfriendly act. But the United States themselves were still a small Power, and lacked the strength to enforce the doctrine. It was British naval power which preserved the South American States from intervention, and it was behind the protection accorded by the British fleet that the "Monroe Doctrine" was first proclaimed to the world. Much though the United States desired freedom from European interference and European connections, it was already clear that they had much in common with Britain. To-day the United States

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

still cling to their traditional policy of isolation, but a new—and not altogether Holy—Alliance of dictators has arisen, and has made its influence felt in the American continent. Once again the community of interests between Britain and the United States has been made clear.

From Spain Canning moved to Portugal. There a not particularly respectable Liberal régime had been established in 1820. Two years later the achievement of independence by the Spanish American colonies affected the Portuguese colony of Brazil, and an independent Empire was proclaimed under the rule of the King of Portugal's elder son, Dom Pedro. This step was followed in Portugal itself by a reactionary rising, led by the King's second son, Dom Miguel, against the Liberal Government. Britain was interested in these events, for Portugal had been an ally of England since 1373, and the two countries had fought side by side in the Spanish Succession War, the Seven Years' War, and during the struggle with Napoleon. Canning therefore intervened to protect Portugal from outside interference. By negotiation he drew from the French a declaration that they would not extend to Portugal their support of reaction in Spain, and he persuaded the King of Portugal to recognize the independence of Brazil. In 1826 the King died, and Dom Pedro, not wishing to leave Brazil, presented the Portuguese with a Constitution and with his daughter Maria (aged eight) as Queen. Ferdinand VII. of Spain then began to intrigue in Portugal in favour of reaction, and the Portuguese Government appealed to Britain for assistance. Canning at once sent troops—within four days of the arrival of the appeal—and the Portuguese Constitution was protected by British bayonets. It was when he announced this step in Parliament that Canning made his most famous speech, the one that he is represented as delivering in the well-known portrait in the National Portrait Gallery :

We go to Portugal, not to rule, not to dictate, not to prescribe constitutions, but to defend and to preserve the independence of an ally. We go to plant the standard of England on the well-known heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted foreign dominion shall not come.

This was non-intervention carried to the length of intervention. Once again the principles of the Holy Alliance had been successfully challenged.

The next crisis that arose gave Canning an opportunity of completing his attack on the conference system by disrupting the Holy Alliance. In 1821 a rising against the oppressive rule of Turkey had broken out in Greece, and the attention of Europe had thereby been directed to the Eastern Question, which was to play so great and unfortunate a part in nineteenth-century history, and was to be, in the end, one of the main causes of the Great War. Expressed in its briefest terms, the Eastern Question was the problem of filling the vacuum caused by the decay of the vast Turkish Empire. Already in 1804 the first blow against Turkish rule had been struck by the Serbs, who, after years of warfare, were granted semi-independence by the Sultan in 1817, but the Serb revolt had been ignored by the Powers, and it was the Greek insurrection which first indicated the strength of the new movements in the Balkans. The French Revolution had stirred up the spirit of Liberalism in Europe, but it had also aroused Nationalism among those peoples who had not yet achieved national unity and independence. In the Balkans, in Italy, and in Germany the spirit of Nationalism was now beginning to work, and as the nineteenth century wore on tremendous changes took place in Europe; Germany and Italy took shape as united and independent States, while the Balkan peoples—Serbs, Greeks, Roumanians, and Bulgarians—fought their way towards a hard-earned independence.

But the rise of Nationalism among these oppressed Balkan peoples, and the decay of Turkey that accompanied it, provided Europe with many problems, together with not a few wars and rumours of wars. Few realized that the Balkan peoples were fit to rule themselves, and both Austria and Russia had hopes of adding parts of the Balkans to their dominions. Their rivalry was to be a fundamental cause—and the immediate cause—of the Great War. Nor were other Powers slow to take advantage of the weakness of the "sick man of Europe," as Turkey came to be called. France had designs at times upon

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Egypt, Syria, and North Africa, and when, at the end of the century, Germany and Italy took their place among the Great Powers, they too looked for legacies from the "sick man."

Britain's interest in the Eastern Question had a different aim. The Levant trade was still developing, and the consolidation of British power in India, together with the memory of Napoleon's designs in the East, made Britain regard with suspicion any attempts to alter existing conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean. Hence the many efforts made to preserve the Turkish Empire from disruption. A further important motive was anxiety lest any attack on Turkey by other Powers should excite the Mohammedans of India, for the Sultan was also the Khalif, the Pope of the Mohammedan world. While, therefore, the other Powers favoured the partition of Turkey, Britain, on the whole, opposed it. This does not mean that the interests of the various peoples under Turkish rule were disregarded. Russia, as we shall see, fought Turkey quite as much on behalf of the oppressed Christian subjects of the Sultan as in furtherance of her own ambitions, while for many years Britain, with pathetic faith in the virtues and possibility of reform, used her great influence at Constantinople to attempt to achieve an improvement of the tyrannous and oppressive rule of the Turks.

The chief danger to Turkey came from Russia. Anglo-French rivalry over Egypt caused many difficulties before it was removed by the *Entente* of 1904, but to the Englishman of the nineteenth century the greatest enemy was Russia, and, as we shall see, Russian expansion in the Near, Middle, and Far East was to exercise a great influence upon British policy until the formation of the Anglo-Russian *Entente* in 1907. Pitt had already stressed the danger to Britain of Russian expansion in the Near East, and when, during the nineteenth century, Russia began to extend her authority in the Middle East, through Turkestan—with its cities of magic names: Tashkent, Khiva, Bokhara, Samarkand—towards Persia and Afghanistan, there were many who feared that an attack on India was impending. These fears were, as we know now, illusory, but they were very

real to many Englishmen, and they can be seen reflected in the political cartoons of *Punch*, who for so long represented the opinions of middle-class Victorianism.

With so complicated a problem as the dissolution of Turkey to be solved it is obvious now that some form of international co-operation was needed to prevent a general war from arising out of the Eastern Question, as, in the end, it did. Two great Conferences on the problem were held in the course of the century, one in 1856, after the Crimean War, and another in 1878, while there were various smaller conferences of Ambassadors to show that the "Concert of Europe" was not entirely non-existent. But under existing conditions it was impossible to grapple thoroughly with the problem; only a policy of patching could be adopted, and that generally raised as many difficulties as it solved. It is one of the major tragedies of the nineteenth century that the Eastern Question was never settled.

One interesting consequence of the Turkish problem was the dissolution of the Holy Alliance, which after 1820 rapidly became nothing more than an alliance against Revolution and Liberalism of the three monarchist and autocratic Eastern Powers—Austria, Prussia, and Russia. When the Greek rising broke out Austria wished it to be treated as a revolt against a lawful sovereign, the Sultan, but Russia had religious sympathies with the Orthodox Christian Greeks, and wished to protect them against Mohammedan tyranny. Canning was quick to take advantage of the situation, and a breach in the Holy Alliance followed. At intervals throughout the century the alliance of the Eastern Powers against Revolution was recreated, but divergent interests in the Balkans always tended to split it, and the end finally came in 1894, when monarchist Russia formally allied herself with republican and revolutionary France.

In his handling of the Greek Question Canning used again the energetic methods that had served him well in the negotiations over Spain and Portugal, and he was able to achieve his main object—the recovery of a strong and independent position for Britain through the splitting of

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

the Holy Alliance. In 1823, to protect British Levant trade from attack, he recognized the Greeks as belligerents, and four years later he was able to make with Russia and France the Treaty of London of 1827, which aimed at bringing the Turco-Greek War to a close and securing semi-independence for the Greeks. The Treaty was a masterstroke, for it isolated Austria and split the Holy Alliance, while at the same time, by attaching Russia to Britain, it imposed some check on Russian ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean. To British trade, too, it promised advantages from the ending of the war and the establishment of a new Greek State. In carrying through this policy Canning received much support from the pro-Greek agitation that was running high in Britain and France, a foreshadowing of later popular sympathy for Bulgarians and Armenians. To Canning the modern Greeks were "a most rascally set," quite as capable as the Turks of "the most disgusting barbarities," but Byron died with them at Missolonghi in 1824, and the popular enthusiasm for Greece was a useful auxiliary to Canning's policy. Canning himself died before he could fully develop that policy, and his successors handled the situation clumsily, but the Treaty of London secured Greek independence. In October 1827, soon after Canning's death, the British, French, and Russian fleets destroyed in the Bay of Navarino the ships of the Sultan's powerful vassal, Mehemet Ali, ruler of Egypt, and this action compelled the abandonment of the Sultan's aim of exterminating the rebellious Greeks with the aid of Mehemet Ali's troops. War followed between Russia and Turkey, and in 1830 the Sultan had to accept the loss of Greece, which became an independent Kingdom under the protection of the three Powers.

Canning died in 1827, soon after his elevation to the premiership, but his achievements remained. Within five years he had set Britain upon the path she was to follow for some fifty years. He had protected British interests and encouraged Liberal and constitutional movements abroad with, at least, the moral support of Britain, while preventing any general interference by the reactionary Powers with the development of liberty and national

freedom in Europe and overseas. International co-operation on a wide scale had gone, but only Castlereagh could have made that ideal effective, while Canning could claim to have disrupted the Holy Alliance. Under his guidance Britain had regained her freedom of action, and could intervene in European affairs where and how she pleased, without any danger of being used by continental States for the furtherance of their own selfish ends. In this policy Canning had the support of public opinion, and by a striking innovation he definitely sought that support. He realized the vital necessity of national unity in matters of foreign policy, and he wished therefore to have his countrymen behind him, so that foreign Governments should understand that he spoke for Britain as a whole and spoke with all her force and all her resources at his command. His frank speeches and the publication of dispatches, which he introduced, initiated the policy of laying before the electors the means of forming opinions on matters of foreign policy and gave him public support in all his measures. "In Canning's view," the foremost modern authority has said, "it was essential that future foreign policy should be both intelligible and popular."¹ But he did not allow the public to dictate his policy. He "made foreign policy popular without ceasing to make it effective,"² and he disclosed only enough information to secure public support, for he had no leanings towards Democracy. Nevertheless the innovation was an important one. In its own day it was regarded by many people abroad as evidence of revolutionary tendencies, and the powers of reaction were horrified. To-day we can appreciate its wisdom, but we have not yet succeeded in achieving a satisfactory compromise between public control and the secrecy necessary for many aspects of foreign policy, while some would say that we have sacrificed for popularity the intelligibility and effectiveness that the successful conduct of foreign policy demands. Canning's policy, however, did not suffer from its popularity, though the next chapter will show how it fared in less able hands.

¹ Temperley, *The Foreign Policy of Canning*, p. 48.

² *Ibid.*, p. 475.

CHAPTER VII

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON, 1827-78

THE dominant figure in British foreign policy in the fifty years that followed the death of Canning was Henry John Temple, third Viscount Palmerston; dominant because with a mastery of foreign affairs and an aptitude for hard work he combined tremendous popularity and the gift of being perfectly representative of his period. Moreover, he spent no less than forty-seven years in the public service, dying in harness as Prime Minister in 1865, within two days of his eighty-first birthday. As a statesman he can best be understood, it has been said, "as an exponent of early and mid-nineteenth-century nationalism,"¹ of nationalism, that is to say, before it had become imperialism. There was little desire in Palmerston to extend British territory, for he had grown up, both personally and politically, during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, when Britain had been fighting hard, not for expansion but for security. Palmerston carried the memory of these years to the end of his life. His main aim was always the security of Britain and of British trade and communications, but he never forgot that it was under British influence, and to a large extent under British leadership, that Europe finally escaped from the burden of war. Like Canning, he possessed, in consequence, an intense pride in his country and in her Constitution, which had carried her through the years of crisis, while with this pride went a desire to see Britain occupying a strong and influential position in international affairs. Like Canning, too, he detested tyranny and reaction, and wished to use Britain's influence for the encouragement of constitutional

¹ Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, vol. ii., p. 424.

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON

movements abroad. In all these directions he continued and enlarged Canning's policy, but although his views were usually sound—at least in the earlier part of his career—his methods were bad. Personally he was a jaunty and somewhat aggressive individual, and he was sadly lacking in tact and patience—the qualities most needed in a Foreign Secretary. As a result, his methods were far from subtle and he tended to make excessive use of the bludgeon. In the end he was outblustered by Bismarck, and it became obvious that much of his policy had been based on bluff. Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor, had called Canning "the malevolent meteor . . . this Scourge of the World," but foreign opinion went even further in its dislike of Palmerston.

If the Devil has a son,
Surely he is Palmerston,

ran a German jingle. In England, though the nickname "Pam" was common, he was widely known as "Lord Pumicestone," a revealing soubriquet. Queen Victoria's opinion of him, though severe, is probably just :

He had many valuable qualities, though many bad ones, and we had, God knows ! terrible trouble with him about Foreign affairs.¹

Palmerston first became Foreign Secretary in 1830, when Lord Grey, whose name is immortally associated with the First Reform Bill, formed a Whig Ministry on the fall of the Tory Government of Wellington, and the new Foreign Secretary was at once confronted with the first of the long series of crises with which he was to grapple for more than thirty years. This first crisis concerned the Netherlands. In the summer of 1830 a revolution had broken out in France, and the autocratic Charles X. had been replaced by a constitutional King, Louis Philippe, with whom Palmerston was to have many dealings. From France the Revolution had spread to Belgium, where a national revolt against the Dutch had led to a demand that the Kingdom of the United Netherlands, established in 1814-15,

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Second Series, vol. i., p. 279.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

should be divided. The situation was a dangerous one, for there were many, both French and Belgian, who wished to see a restoration of the situation that had lasted from 1794 to 1814, when Belgium had been a part of France. Such a step, of course, Britain could not permit, and it was fortunate that the new French King was determined to preserve good relations with Britain. He needed peace to make his position secure, the more so as Russia, Prussia, and Austria viewed him with disfavour for having gained his crown by a revolution.

Before his Government fell Wellington had summoned a Conference of Ambassadors to London to consider the situation, but it was Palmerston who had to deal with the Belgian problem, and he showed in his handling of it that care for British interests and that indifference for the feelings of other countries that were to become his chief characteristics. From the first he showed his determination to prevent France from using the Belgian revolt to strengthen her position. There were some Frenchmen who wanted to annex Belgium, others would have liked some slight addition of territory for France, and in the end, when the independence of Belgium was established, there was an attempt to put on the new Belgian throne a son of the French King. To all these propositions Palmerston replied with unswerving opposition, expressed in the strongest terms. France, he said, should not even have "a cabbage garden or a vineyard."¹ Then, when King William of the Netherlands refused to recognize the loss of the southern half of his Kingdom and tried to recover it by force of arms, Palmerston co-operated with the French in checking the attempt, but insisted that the French troops should withdraw from Belgium as soon as their task had been fulfilled. "One thing is certain," he wrote to the British Ambassador in Paris, "the French must go out of Belgium, or we have a general war, and war in a given number of days."² This was "Pumicestone" indeed.

It is probably too much to call Palmerston, as one Belgian

¹ Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, vol. i., p. 128.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 134.

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON

historian has done, "the father of Belgium," for his policy was based rather on a determination to protect British interests in the freedom of the Netherlands than on a desire to see Belgium independent. He was helped, too, by the situation in Europe. Louis Philippe and his ministers were anxious to preserve good relations with Britain, and the Eastern Powers, who would otherwise have intervened in support of the Dutch, were preoccupied by a great Polish rising against Russia. Nevertheless, Palmerston handled the Belgian problem with great skill, taking advantage of the situation to protect a vital British interest, and at the same time preserving Anglo-French friendship without paying the French price. It was not until 1839, however, that the Dutch King accepted the independence of Belgium. When the tardy recognition was at last forced from him the independence and neutrality of Belgium were guaranteed by the Great Powers in the Treaty of London of 1839. It was this Treaty which Germany treated as a "scrap of paper" and tore up in 1914. The danger which Palmerston had feared then appeared; Belgium was overrun by a great military Power, though not by France. Palmerston himself had been determined to prevent active intervention in the Belgian dispute either by France or by the Eastern Powers. "As long as both parties remain quiet we shall be friends with both," he wrote in 1831, "but . . . whichever side breaks the peace, that side will find us against them."¹ It was an attitude similar to this, as we shall see in the next chapter, which caused Britain before 1914 to unite with France against the danger of a disturbance of the peace by Germany.

After Belgium, Palmerston's next concern was with the affairs of Spain and Portugal. In 1828 Dom Miguel, Queen Maria's uncle, had returned to Portugal as King and had established a violently reactionary régime. Under Wellington British relations with Miguel were bad, but Palmerston openly took the side of the young Queen and her constitutionalist supporters. Englishmen enlisted in her service, ships and war materials were allowed to pass from Britain to Portugal, and even British naval officers, under assumed

¹ Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, vol. i., p. 127.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

names, joined the Queen as volunteers, while Palmerston warned the Eastern Powers against "intervention." When, after the death of the infamous Ferdinand VII. in 1833, a similar situation arose in Spain, Palmerston almost as openly supported the Spanish Liberals, who were fighting for their young Queen, Isabella II., against another "wicked uncle," the reactionary Don Carlos (brother of Ferdinand VII.), and his "Carlist" supporters. In 1834 Palmerston formed with France and the Governments of the two Queens of Spain and Portugal a Quadruple Alliance designed to prevent reactionary intervention and to secure a Liberal triumph. Again British subjects were allowed to take part in a civil war, and a "Spanish Legion" under the command of a Peninsular veteran, Colonel Evans, fought for Isabella in the terrible "Carlist Wars" that raged in Spain for several years. Palmerston was quite frank about his policy; the Treaty of 1834, he declared, "establishes a quadruple alliance among the constitutional states of the west, which will serve as a powerful counterpoise to the Holy Alliance of the east." And he added a characteristic touch—"I should like to see Metternich's face when he reads our Treaty!"¹ The policy was Canning's, but on a much greater scale, and it included open intervention. Yet there is little doubt that Palmerston had the majority of Englishmen behind him in his truculent nationalism and his open support of Liberal movements abroad.

To preserve this Quadruple Alliance, and the *Entente* with France that followed from it, it was necessary to remain on good terms with the French, but Palmerston's pugnacious attitude did not help towards this end. He had already frustrated French ambitions in Belgium, and, as we shall see, he gave Louis Philippe a further rebuff when one of the periodical crises of the Eastern Question arose in 1839. The policies were sound, but Palmerston's hectoring tone and his lack of consideration for French feelings created unnecessary difficulties and estranged French opinion. While he was out of office, between 1841 and 1846, British Foreign Policy was in charge of Lord Aberdeen, who was Foreign Secretary in Sir Robert Peel's

¹ Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, vol. i., p. 148.

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON

Tory Government. Aberdeen was much more mild and conciliatory than Palmerston, and under him the *Entente* became something of a reality, for he did all he could to strengthen Anglo-French friendship. In this task he was well supported by Queen Victoria, who, with her husband, the Prince Consort, was making her influence felt in British policy. Throughout the reign that influence was exercised, with few exceptions, wisely and advantageously, and in the best interests of Britain. Foreign affairs interested the Queen, and in them she was rarely at fault, though in internal affairs her judgment was often less sound. A great Liberal historian (who is not unmindful of the most serious flaw in her career, her treatment of Gladstone) has said of her :

I can honestly affirm that my study of British foreign policy has led me to an almost unstinted admiration of Queen Victoria,¹

and this view can be compared with the opinion of Sir Michael Hicks Beach, written in the last weeks of the Queen's life :

We shall never know how much she has done for the country in European politics till we have lost her.²

Between 1841 and 1846 Queen Victoria's influence was exercised in support of Aberdeen's policy by friendly meetings with Louis Philippe and his numerous family, but the situation was changed when Palmerston returned to office with Lord John Russell's Liberal Government in 1846. A dispute arose over the choice of husbands for Queen Isabella of Spain and her sister. The matter had already been half-settled while Aberdeen was in office, in order to avoid any danger that Britain or France might suggest prospective husbands as a means of advancing their own interests in Spain. Palmerston, however, handled the affair so clumsily that the French thought that Britain was repudiating the agreement, and in consequence, by dexterous management, Louis Philippe managed to marry his second son to Isabella's sister at the same time as the Queen herself married her cousin, the Duke of Cadiz, by

¹ Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question*, p. viii.

² *Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach*, vol. ii., p. 131.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

whom it was not expected that she would have any children. Louis Philippe's scheme was wrecked when Isabella did bear a son, the future Alfonso XII. (father of the now exiled Alfonso XIII.), but the Anglo-French *Entente* had also been destroyed, mainly by Palmerston's truculence.

Other examples of Palmerston's methods were provided in good measure in these years. In 1839 came the first "Far Eastern crisis" of the century. For some years British merchants had been trying to open China to British trade, but the Emperor of China, though he was not even able to preserve order in his own dominions, regarded all foreigners as barbarian vassals, and refused to open his ports to them. Trade was carried on, however, under serious difficulties, for Chinese products were needed in Europe, and although the import of opium was forbidden in China a considerable trade in that unpleasant commodity was developed by British merchants, there being few other things that China would take in return for her teas and silks. No attempt was made to check this trade until 1839—in fact, Chinese officials connived at it and profited by it—but in that year the stocks of opium at Canton were seized, without warning, and the British agent on the spot was badly treated. Further incidents occurred, though the British in Canton behaved with moderation, and finally British ships were attacked. Palmerston made it clear that Britain did not dispute the Emperor's right to forbid the trade in opium, but he objected to the treatment given to British subjects, and a minor "war" followed. By the Treaty of Nanking of 1842 Britain gained Hong Kong as a trading centre, and five Chinese ports were opened to British trade. The opening-up of China to Western trade and Western influence had begun; nor could it have been avoided much longer. Much has been made of the "immorality" of Britain's conduct, but the fact remains that the war was *not* fought to force opium upon reluctant Chinese; to call it the "Opium War" would be equivalent to calling the Great War the "Sarajevo War."¹ The real cause of the war was the Chinese refusal to recognize Euro-

¹ Whyte, *China and Foreign Powers*, p. 3.

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON

peans and to grant them equality of status in China. Britain was seeking only a market for her goods ; she did not want, and has never sought, any political control of China.

A further incident occurred in 1856, when Palmerston was Prime Minister. The Treaty of 1842 was not properly carried out by China and insults to foreigners were common. Finally Palmerston took advantage of a technical " insult " to the British flag flown by a Chinese ship, the *Arrow*, to launch the Second Chinese War in order to compel the Emperor to open friendly relations with the European Powers on equal terms. This aim was achieved by the Treaties of Tientsin of 1861. The *Arrow* incident was generally recognized at the time as a deplorable *casus belli*, but the situation in China had become impossible, and Britain did not monopolize the advantages she gained. Palmerston's drastic methods were warmly approved by public opinion. He was defeated in the House of Commons, but won a handsome victory in the General Election that followed, even the great radical pacifists, Cobden and Bright, being unseated. It was a striking manifestation of the excitable mid-Victorian nationalism which Palmerston seemed to personify.

In Europe, while he defended British interests against France, Palmerston was no less careful than in the Far East to give to British subjects protection against insult. In 1850, for instance, he bullied the Greek Government into compensating the disreputable Portuguese Jew, Don Pacifico, who claimed to be a British subject, for damage done to his house by a Greek mob. It was one of the most discreditable episodes of Palmerston's career, and he staved off a serious defeat in the Commons only by a long and powerful speech. Yet his zeal as a champion of Liberal and constitutional movements abroad did much to offset his nationalist fervour. In 1848, the great " Year of Revolutions," he openly showed his personal sympathy for the Liberal Nationalists struggling for freedom in Italy and Hungary, and he exerted all Britain's influence to protect the Hungarian refugees who had fled to Turkey to escape the abominable Austrian repression. Nor did

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

this sympathy fade when he became Prime Minister. Already in 1848 he had suggested that Austria should abandon her Italian possessions, and in the fateful years from 1859 to 1861, when the unity of free Italy was achieved, the approval of Palmerston as Premier and Russell as Foreign Secretary was a valuable support to the Italians. A French suggestion that Garibaldi's famous exploits in Southern Italy should be checked by joint Anglo-French naval action was rejected, and in October 1860 Russell refused to censure the forcible addition of the Papal States to United Italy :

Her Majesty's Government can see no sufficient ground for the severe censure of Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia. Her Majesty's Government will turn their eyes rather to the gratifying prospect of a people building up the edifice of their liberties and consolidating the work of this independence, amid the sympathy and good wishes of Europe.

This statement was greeted with delirious enthusiasm in Italy, and it cemented the Anglo-Italian friendship which has only been broken in our own day. The support of Italy was quite disinterested—in fact, Palmerston and Russell did not reveal their attitude until they were sure that France, who had given military aid to the new Kingdom, would not make the Italians pay for her assistance with large concessions of territory—and it provides an example of Palmerston's policy at its best. Hitherto, however, Palmerston had been dealing with small States or with Powers who were unwilling to risk war with Britain. The day was now coming when he was to meet his match in Bismarck, and Europe was then to discover that his sympathy stopped short at moral support, that his bluster was not backed by force.

In 1863 there broke out a serious revolt against the Tsar in Russian Poland, and in the following year a dispute between Denmark on the one side and Austria and Prussia on the other led to war. In both cases Palmerston and Russell gave verbal encouragement to the weaker party, in both their encouragement needlessly prolonged a futile resistance, in both they withdrew and hastened to explain,

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON

too late, that they had meant to give only sympathy, not "material aid." In the Danish war British sympathies were with Denmark, for in 1863 the Prince of Wales had married the beautiful and gracious lady who afterwards became Queen Alexandra. When war was approaching Palmerston declared in the Commons that if Denmark were attacked by Prussia and Austria "it would not be Denmark alone with which they would have to contend," but, as he was not prepared to go to war, the threat—if indeed any real threat were intended—had no effect. Bismarck was now in charge of Prussian policy, and "blood and iron" had become the order of the day. The Canning policy, distorted as it had been by Palmerston, had had its day, and the fact was noticed by continental observers. "That England will become a second-rate Power," wrote a distinguished Frenchman, "is a foregone conclusion, at all events so long as she invariably backs out whenever she is called upon to take action as a first-rate Power."¹

But before we pass on to consider, in the next chapter, the results for Britain of this triumph of "blood and iron" we must conclude our study of the Palmerston period with a rapid survey of the Eastern Question, and of the efforts made by Disraeli in the 'seventies to recover for Britain the strong position in Europe which Palmerston had in the end lost.

Palmerston himself was confronted with one aspect of the Eastern Question in 1839. Mehemet Ali, the ruler of Egypt, and technically a subject of Turkey, had wrested Syria from the Sultan, and the Sultan, lacking the power to resist his powerful vassal, had placed himself under the protection of Russia by the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi (1833). Palmerston regarded the Russian motives with suspicion, and was determined to prevent any partition of Turkey that would give Russia the control of the Eastern Mediterranean; similarly, he was opposed to Mehemet Ali's idea of proclaiming himself independent of the Sultan, for Palmerston feared that such a step would encourage French designs on Syria and Egypt. Turkey itself Palmerston

¹ Bell, *Lord Palmerston*, vol. ii., p. 337.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

wished to support—"it will last our time, if we try to prop it up and not to pull it down,"¹ he said—and he believed that a thorough reform of the Turkish Empire was possible which would make it "a respectable Power." This pathetic notion, so often to be proved a fallacy, remained one of the basic principles of British policy for forty years. It was the more pathetic because Mehemet Ali was anxious for good relations with Britain, and Russian designs on India, as we have already mentioned, were non-existent.

In 1839 the Sultan attacked Mehemet Ali, hoping to recover the territory that had been lost, but his troops were routed, and the Turkish problem at once became acute. Fortunately Russian policy was moderate, and Palmerston joined with the Tsar in checking firmly French support of Mehemet Ali, while British ships helped the Turks to drive the Egyptians out of Syria. Palmerston's attitude prevented the French from going to war on behalf of their *protégé*, though his hectoring tone needlessly exacerbated them. Thus ended the first of the three occasions on which Britain intervened to save Turkey from disruption.

Palmerston was not in charge of foreign affairs when there arose, in 1853, the second crisis, which led to the Crimean War, "the most unnecessary war waged by Britain during the past century,"² as it has justly been called. The Prime Minister at the time was Aberdeen, a great lover of peace, and he headed a Coalition Government in which Palmerston was Home Secretary. Ten years before, during a visit to England, the Tsar had suggested that Britain and Russia should decide what was to be done when Turkey eventually collapsed. Aberdeen, who had then been Foreign Secretary, had not committed himself to any definite reply, but the Tsar had imagined that his suggestion had been favourably received. In 1853, in view of the prevailing disorders in Turkey, it seemed to him that the time was ripe; Russia and Austria, he proposed, should divide the Balkans between them, and Britain should have Egypt. Unfortunately the situation was complicated by a

¹ Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 195.

² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON

dispute between France and Russia about the guardianship of the Holy Places in Palestine, while, in addition, the Tsar was determined to exercise his rights (recognized in several earlier Treaties) as protector of the Orthodox Christians under Turkish rule. In July 1853 the Tsar invaded Turkish territory, calling on his subjects to defend the Orthodox Faith against the Turks. He hoped to see Turkey submit without war, but the Turks resisted, and an outburst of newspaper and pamphlet agitation against Russia followed in Britain. Irresponsible public opinion clamoured for war, and so completely lost its head that Prince Albert was accused of being pro-Russian, merely because he happened to be a foreigner, and crowds collected to see him taken to the Tower for treason! Palmerston inflamed this excitement further by resigning from the Government, though on another issue, at a time when he was pressing Aberdeen to adopt a strong line against Russia, and the destruction of the Turkish fleet by the Russians off Sinope (the "Sinope massacre," as it was crudely and inaccurately called) further increased the tension in Britain. The unfortunate Prime Minister, with his colleagues divided on the matter, with the public crying out against Russia, and with insufficient strength of character to take firmly the peaceful line he preferred, found himself dragged into war. He confessed himself that the Government had "drifted" into war, and the sense of responsibility haunted him for the rest of his days. Britain had nothing to gain by the war, but the excited and ill-informed public had forced the pace. "If ever a war was made by an ill-informed but ardent public opinion, against the better judgment of a divided Government," one authority has said, "it was the Crimean War. It is the classic disproof of the view that peoples are always pacific and only statesmen and financiers warlike."¹

The Crimean War is remembered now only for the gallant but futile episode of the "Charge of the Light Brigade," and for the work of Florence Nightingale. By the Treaty of Paris that ended the war Turkey was brought into the "Concert of Europe" as an equal, and it was therefore

¹ Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 325.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

recognized that all the Powers—and not Russia alone—had an interest in her fate. The inevitable decline was still further postponed, and Turkey soon learnt that she could avoid interference by playing off the Powers one against another. All Europe was later to pay the price for this cunning policy.

The mutual suspicions of the Powers, and the intransigence of Turkey, were clearly revealed in the next crisis of the Eastern Question, which distracted Europe from 1875 to 1878. Disraeli was then Prime Minister, for the second time, at the age of seventy, and although he had a sound understanding of the necessities underlying British policy he was not at his best when dealing with so complicated an issue as the Eastern Question. And, if the truth be told, "Dizzy" was no less of an "old man in a hurry" than Gladstone was to be ten years later over Irish Home Rule. He confessed himself that power had come to him too late, but he longed to attach his name to some great exploit, and as he could not choose an international crisis he had to take the one that presented itself. As we shall see in a moment, his general views on British policy were sound, but in dealing with Russia and Turkey he adopted an attitude that was too Palmerstonian. He was genuinely anxious for British interests, and wished to see Britain holding that important position among the nations which had been the object of Palmerston's policy, but he did not really understand the Eastern Question, and his suspicions of Russia led Britain, as was jestingly said at the time, to "the 'Dizzy' brink of war" in a matter which, we can see now, did not actually affect any vital British interest. He had dreams of "settling" the Eastern Question, and hoped thereby to establish his own reputation and to give Britain a leading position in Europe. Accordingly, when in 1877 Russia went to war with Turkey in defence of the unfortunate Bulgarian subjects of the Sultan, who were suffering the horrors of the "Bulgarian atrocities," Disraeli adopted a high tone and threatened Russia with war. Southern England was with him, and the war fever revived memories of the Crimean War: it was now that the music-halls popularized the jingle:

THE AGE OF PALMERSTON

We don't want to fight, but—by Jingo—if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the
money too.

Gladstone, however, took a firm stand on the opposite side, and the North stood by him. In his famous pamphlet, "Bulgarian Horrors," Gladstone made the moral appeal of which he was so great a master :

Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned.

It was a "purple patch," but a masterly appeal ; 200,000 copies of the pamphlet were sold—much to Disraeli's disgust.

In spite of British protests Russia continued the war until Turkey was defeated, and the Treaty of San Stefano (March 1878) set up a large independent Bulgaria, while granting complete freedom to Serbia and Roumania. But this unilateral and forceful revision of the Turkish dominions was a breach of the "Concert" of 1856, and Russia, exhausted by the struggle, agreed to a Conference at Berlin, where the terms of the Treaty were reconsidered. Bulgaria was much reduced and was divided into two parts (which remained apart for only seven years); Austria was allowed to occupy Bosnia-Hercegovina (now part of Yugoslavia), and Britain took Cyprus as a naval base (a function it has failed to fulfil). Russia gained but little territory after her sacrifices, and was therefore indignant at the gains made by Austria, who had taken no part in the war. Austria herself was committed to expansion in the Balkans, and was soon to find her path blocked by Serbia. The seeds of the Great War, in other words, were being sown.

Disraeli's aim in risking war had been the protection of the Eastern Mediterranean and, therefore, of India, against Russia. He opposed the "Big Bulgaria" established at San Stefano because he feared that it would fall under Russian influence, though the fear was to prove completely unjustified. It was long before Europe learnt that the

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Balkan peoples themselves were the best heirs to the Turkish legacy.

Already, before 1878, Disraeli had made a step which was destined to have important consequences. In 1875 the Khedive Ismail of Egypt (a grandson of Mehemet Ali) was compelled by financial necessity—the result of gross extravagance—to sell his shares in the Suez Canal Company, and Disraeli bought them for Britain. Palmerston earlier had opposed the building of the Canal, fearing that the French would use it to interfere with British communications with India, but Disraeli realized the strategic importance for Britain of a share in its control. The purchase was part of his campaign for rousing Englishmen to a sense of their Imperial responsibilities, and he fanned the Imperialism which was to become so marked a feature of the later years of Queen Victoria's reign. As that Imperialism developed it became attached to an attitude of isolation towards Europe, but to such an attitude Disraeli himself was strongly opposed. He realized the closeness of the connection between Imperial and Foreign affairs for Britain, and he wished to see his country playing an active part in Europe and using her influence for the preservation of peace. These views were well expressed in the great "Swan Song" speech which he delivered at the Guildhall in November 1879 :

If . . . one of the most extensive and wealthiest of empires in the world . . . from a perverse interpretation of its insular geographical position, turns an indifferent ear to the feelings and the fortunes of Continental Europe, such a course would, I believe, only end in its becoming an object of general plunder. So long as the power and advice of England are felt in the councils of Europe, peace, I believe, will be maintained, and maintained for a long period. Without their presence, war, as has happened before and too frequently of late, seems to me to be inevitable.

So clear an exposition of the true essence of British policy is a tribute to his statesmanly vision. His advice was neglected in the years that followed, but "splendid isolation" had to be abandoned in the end, and Disraeli's words are more than ever of vital importance to-day.

CHAPTER VIII

BRITAIN AND GERMANY, 1871-1914

THE Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and the creation of the German Empire in January 1871 marked a change in the European situation as drastic as that brought about by the establishment of National-Socialism in 1933. 1871 saw the creation of the "Second Reich," 1933 the rise of the "Third Reich." The "First Reich" had been the mediæval Holy Roman Empire, consisting, in practice, mainly of Germany; it had finally passed from the European scene at the behest of Napoleon in 1806. Prussia had been harshly treated by Napoleon, but since 1815 she had gradually made herself the leader of North Germany and the champion of German Nationalism. A National-Liberal movement during the "Year of Revolutions," 1848, had failed, and Bismarck, who was called to power by the King of Prussia in 1862, realized that methods of "blood and iron" would be necessary for the achievement of German unity. Bismarck's plans, however, were confined to North and Central Germany: he had no desire to include the vast Austrian Empire, with its many non-German peoples. Hence the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Bismarck planned the war in order to exclude Austria from Germany, and the victories of the Prussian soldiers achieved his object. Austria was compelled to turn her attention away from Germany, to the South East, to the Balkans. The resultant "Drang nach Osten," the "Drive to the East," intensified the difficulties of the Eastern Question, and was in the end a major cause of the Great War. A further, and no less important, result of the exclusion of Austria from Germany was the development—among the Germans of Austria proper (the post-War Austrian Re-

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

public), and of Bohemia (now part of Czechoslovakia)—of an agitation for union with the German Empire which Prussia had created in North and Central Germany. One Austrian brought up in the atmosphere of this agitation—Adolf Hitler—was destined to play a great part in the history of Germany and of Europe. Hitler has achieved the reunion of the Austrian Germans with Germany, and has thereby brought Austria back into the Germany from which Bismarck excluded her in 1866.

The Austro-Prussian War was Bismarck's first stage. The second he achieved when he took advantage of a dispute over the vacant Spanish throne to inveigle Napoleon III. of France into war. There followed the disastrous defeat of France, the fall of Napoleon III., and the proclamation of the German Empire, with the King of Prussia as German Emperor. Apart from the Germans of Austria, whom Bismarck did not want, the unity of the German people was now achieved.

The success of Bismarck's methods brought a new element into European affairs. "Blood and iron" had triumphed, and a new spirit of hardness and of militarism began to appear. Europe, it was said, had exchanged a Mistress (France) for a Master (Germany). National rivalries tended to harden, and all the Powers began to adopt a sterner tone, while the loss of Alsace-Lorraine left in France much bitterness and a burning desire for revenge. Yet more of the seeds of the Great War had been sown.

In spite of his success, Bismarck did not regard the fortunes of the new German Empire with any equanimity. As one historian has said, he was "like a man who has made a huge fortune by careful speculation, but who has no means of knowing whether his fortune is secure."¹ He lay awake at night, as the British Ambassador reported, thinking with horror of "the appalling weakness of the geographical position of the German Empire,"² for he realized only too well how open the German frontiers were to invasion. France was permanently hostile, and Russia

¹ Taffs, *Lord Odo Russell*, p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

and Austria were in danger of drifting into opposition over the Eastern Question. A war with Russia, Bismarck knew, would probably ruin Austria, and the break-up of the Habsburg Empire would immensely increase the power, and probably the territory, of Russia, who would then become a menace to Germany. With Russia itself Bismarck wished to be on friendly terms, for the frontier between the two Empires, which ran through what had been (and, after 1918, was again to be) Poland, lacked natural defences. Moreover, though France was too weak to strike at Germany alone, she might be able to form an alliance with Russia, if the friendship of Russia were not carefully preserved by Germany. It was this danger of a double attack, of a "war on two fronts," which Bismarck feared above all things. The idea of a Coalition against Germany was to him a perpetual nightmare. He longed for peace and security, peace in which Germany could settle down into her new position. Many internal problems had to be solved; industries were expanding rapidly, Socialism was increasing, and there was a long and bitter conflict (the "Kulturkampf") with the Roman Catholic Church (a conflict that has been reawakened by Hitler). Peace was essential for the steady development of Germany, and Bismarck therefore took his precautions to make war impossible. The strength of the German Army was kept up, so that Germany remained the foremost military Power on the Continent. France was encouraged to forget Alsace-Lorraine in colonial development; good relations with Russia were preserved, and every endeavour was made to prevent a quarrel between Russia and Austria. Colonies, Bismarck frequently said, were unnecessary to Germany; nor did she need a strong fleet. There seemed little danger, therefore, of a clash with Britain.

All these threads of policy—and there were many more—Bismarck kept in his own immensely capable hands. He has well been compared to a man riding a restless horse (Germany) while juggling successfully with five balls (the other five Great Powers—Russia, Austria, France, Britain, and Italy). But after Bismarck's fall in 1890 German policy passed into less capable hands, and William II.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

and his advisers, in their incredible folly, made all the mistakes which Bismarck had foreseen and provided against. It was the folly of William II. that brought to Germany the Great War which Bismarck had feared.

The attitude of Britain towards the unification of Germany had at first been friendly and sympathetic. France was still unpopular, and Bismarck's cunning handling of the situation that led to the Franco-Prussian War made France appear the aggressor. British sympathy was on the whole with Prussia in the early stages of the war, but the official attitude was one of neutrality, though, at the suggestion of Queen Victoria, a treaty was arranged with the belligerents whereby Britain bound herself to join in the war if either of them violated Belgian neutrality. The harsh terms of the Peace Treaty, however, shocked many Englishmen. It was realized that a new and ruthless spirit had taken control of Germany, and Gladstone voiced the feelings of many when he described the seizure of Alsace-Lorraine as "the *beginning* of a new series of European complications." Events were to prove him right.

But the fact which most disturbed British opinion after 1871 was the strong tone frequently adopted by Germany in her dealings with other countries. It seemed that Germany, not content with her great military strength, was determined to dominate the whole of Europe, and it was this attitude, more than anything else, which gradually turned British opinion from sympathy to suspicion, and finally to open hostility. By the end of the century talk of an Anglo-German war was common. } The most striking evidence of this appearance in Germany of a desire to dominate over all was provided by the "War Scare" episode of 1875. Bismarck was alarmed in that year by the rapid recovery of France, and feared that the French might be preparing for the war of revenge, of which he stood in terror. There arose, in consequence, among military circles in Germany a demand for a "preventive war" which should leave France completely disabled and thereby make any future attack on her part impossible. These rumours of a "preventive war" roused indignation in Britain. Queen Victoria wrote, in her usual vigorous style,

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

to her eldest daughter, the Crown Princess of Germany (mother of William II.):

Bismarck is a terrible man, and he makes Germany greatly disliked; indeed *no one* will stand the overbearing insolent way in which he acts and treats other nations. . . . You know that the Prussians are not popular unfortunately, and *no one* will tolerate any Power wishing to dictate to all Europe. This country, with the greatest wish to go hand in hand with Germany, cannot and *WILL not stand it*.¹

The modern parallel is obvious.

It is doubtful whether Bismarck himself really wanted war, but his hysterical fears, intensified by the French recovery and inflamed by the exaggerated reports of his spies, led him to toy with the idea that a second war with France might be necessary for Germany's security. However, the diplomatic pressure of Britain and Russia (Queen Victoria had written to the Tsar to beg him to use his influence at Berlin) relieved the situation, and the German Government hastened to disclaim all aggressive intentions. Nevertheless the episode served to increase suspicion and nervousness about Germany in other countries, though Germans (then as now) could not understand why they were becoming unpopular. A remark made by Field-Marshal von Moltke at the time is revealing: he told Lord Odo Russell, the British Ambassador, that

Germany, for reasons he could not account for, since the foundation of the Empire, appeared to inspire hatred and suspicion, rather than confidence, to her former friends and allies.²

Even before the Franco-Prussian War Britain had been developing towards Europe an attitude that was more nearly isolationist, and Disraeli's vigorous policy did not reverse the process. For the last twenty years of the century British policy was far less active in Europe than it had hitherto been: it was the era of "splendid isolation." The explanation is partly to be found in continental developments. The other Powers were in-

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, Second Series, vol. ii., p. 406.

² *Tafis, Lord Odo Russell*, p. 90.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

creasing their military strength, based now upon conscription, and Britain, with her small professional army, could not compete with them, while the failure, in the end, of the Palmerston policy had made it clear that Britain could not hope to intervene in European affairs at all unless she was prepared to intervene with adequate force. The days when British policy could be enforced by naval pressure alone had already passed. And there were other reasons for the change to isolation. Public interest, which had never been constantly interested in foreign affairs, was concentrating upon internal developments—upon political reform, social reform, and the Irish question. Commerce was expanding, too, in every part of the world, and the Empire was undergoing rapid development, while national pride in Britain's overseas possessions was developing into that Imperialism which found literary expression in the writings of such men as Kipling.

A further factor of importance was the growth of tariffs on the Continent and in the United States. To preserve her position, and to protect the rapidly increasing population and the rising standard of living, Britain had to seek new markets. These were particularly found in Africa, and the opening up of the "Dark Continent" followed. A once popular saying had it that "trade followed the flag." It would be truer to say of Africa, as of India, that the flag followed trade—and frequently only long afterwards.

The change in the direction of British policy first clearly showed itself in Egypt. Hitherto, although vast sums of money had been invested by British subjects in foreign countries, British Governments had consistently refused to interfere or to support the claims of shareholders. Palmerston, for instance, had made a stand for Don Pacifico, whose property had been destroyed, but at the very same time he had refused to press upon Spain the claims of the holders of Spanish bonds.¹ It had even been possible, a few years later, for Russia to raise a loan in London during the Crimean War.² But the loans made to the Egyptian Government caused a change of policy about 1880. Disraeli

¹ Woodward, *War and Peace in Europe, 1815—70*, p. 103.

² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

took advantage of Khedive Ismail's pressing need of money to achieve his famous Suez Canal *coup*, and in the following year Egyptian finances were in so bad a state that Ismail's British and French creditors appointed a Commission to supervise the collection of the debt charges. The administration of Egypt was, however, so incompetent and oppressive that further foreign interference was inevitable. In 1881 the discontent in Egypt came to a head in the revolt of Arabi Pasha against the new Khedive, Tewfik. Europeans were murdered, and, as the Sultan would not intervene, Britain and France decided to restore order. But a change of Government in France caused the French to withdraw, and Britain alone had to carry through the task. Thus began, while Gladstone was in office, the close connection between Britain and Egypt that is still not completely broken, and from which, thanks to the enlightened policy of such men as Lord Cromer, Egypt has derived so much benefit. Britain had intervened in Egypt to restore order. She remained there, at first very reluctantly, to set Egypt on her feet, to protect foreign interests in the country, and to guard it against the barbarities of the Mahdi in the Sudan. There was a further interest. Some Power had to take Egypt under its wing, and, in view of the strategic position of the country on the route to India, that Power, from the British point of view, could only be Britain. Bismarck had suggested to Disraeli in 1878 that Egypt should be the British portion of the Turkish legacy (an idea that had already been raised by Tsar Nicholas I. more than twenty years before), and could not understand why the suggestion was indignantly rejected in Britain. Yet the pressure of events overcame British opposition to the idea, and, as Bismarck had hoped, the result was a growing estrangement between Britain and France, as the French resented what became, in all but name, a British Protectorate over Egypt. Turkey, too, began to turn from Britain, for Disraeli had not saved her from loss of territory in 1878, and British intervention in Egypt was resented in Constantinople as much as in Paris. Englishmen were beginning to realize that, in defending Turkey, Britain "had put her money on the

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

wrong horse," as Lord Salisbury later expressed it, and the murderous tyranny of the Sultan Abdul Hamid II. ("Abdul the Damned") strengthened this opinion. The terrible Armenian Massacres of 1894-96, in particular, showed that British hopes of reform in Turkey were vain, and the estrangement began that led in 1914 to Turkey's entering the Great War against us.

With all these facts in mind, it is not difficult to understand why Britain tended to adopt a policy of isolation after 1878. Yet the isolation was never complete. It was rather an attitude of mind than a political reality, and in the end it was abandoned when its dangers were once more made apparent. The term "splendid isolation" is always associated with Lord Salisbury, who was both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary for eleven of the last fifteen years of the century; but the expression occurred only incidentally in a speech which he made in 1896, and was never intended to be a succinct statement of policy. In fact, Salisbury meant no more than a description of the *geographical* position of Britain, and he constantly criticized any tendency to *political* isolation, such as was shown by Gladstone. "We are a part of the community of Europe," Salisbury said in a speech in 1888, "and we must do our duty as such," and he summed up his view of foreign policy as "neighbourly," adding :

There is all the difference in the world between good-natured, good-humoured efforts to keep well with your neighbours, and that spirit of haughty and sullen isolation which has been dignified by the name of "non-intervention."¹

Yet, in spite of Salisbury's good intentions, relations with the other Powers deteriorated in these years. In France anti-British feeling was strong: the colonial expansion which both countries were now undertaking in various parts of the world led to several diplomatic clashes, and, although serious trouble was averted, the hostility that had followed British intervention in Egypt did not diminish. The climax came in 1898, when the British forces under

¹ Cecil, *Life of Salisbury*, vol. iv., p. 90.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

Kitchener, which were reconquering the Sudan, met a French expedition, led by Major Marchand, at Fashoda on the Upper Nile. As a result of these rival claims to the Sudan there was for a time talk of war, but France yielded the point, and a gradual improvement in relations followed. Finally the outstanding points of difference were settled in 1904, when the *Entente* was formed.

But, while relations with France were bad, England's position in Europe was far from "splendid," for Russia was no less hostile. A serious incident occurred in 1885 over the occupation by Russia of the Penjdeh valley on the Afghan border, and war was narrowly averted. Then, in the 'nineties, came Russian expansion in the Far East, with its obvious threat to the integrity of China and to British trading interests in that country. Everything pointed, in fact, towards a close understanding with Germany as the only possible friend for Britain. Germany as a land Power and Britain as a sea Power, Englishmen frequently observed after 1871, were obviously well suited to be allies; each could help the other in the event of war with France or Russia. But actually an agreement, as Lord Salisbury discovered, was not possible, for while Britain needed assistance against Russia, Bismarck was concerned solely with getting allies against France. Britain would not commit herself to take part in a Franco-German war, and Bismarck had no intention of risking a quarrel with Russia for the sake of Britain. In fact, Bismarck concluded in 1887 the secret "Reinsurance Treaty" with Russia even while he was discussing Anglo-German relations with Lord Salisbury. Nevertheless there was no conflict of interests between Britain and Germany in Europe, and when the old Emperor William I. died in 1888, to be succeeded first by his son, Frederick III., who was Queen Victoria's son-in-law, and then by his grandson, William II., who was also the Queen's grandson, it was generally expected that Anglo-German friendship would soon be firmly established.

Yet there were spheres in which for a time a clash threatened between Germany and Britain, the spheres of commerce and of colonies. The view is sometimes heard

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

that the Great War was in part the result of Anglo-German commercial rivalry ; it is expressed in particular by those whose fetish it is that all wars are due to the machinations of commercial and industrial magnates. Such a view of the Great War is completely inaccurate. British trade, it is true, was affected at first by the rapid industrial expansion of Germany after 1871, but by the end of the century the inevitable check to the rate of expansion had set in for Germany, while British trade was finding new markets and at the same time was actually benefiting from German competition through being compelled to meet it by bringing British methods and equipment up-to-date. In addition, Germany was one of Britain's best customers ; British business men knew that there was room in the world for the trade of both countries, and that a war between them would be most harmful to both. Moreover, Britain's most serious trade rival was the United States—a more serious rival than Germany—and another competitor, on a smaller scale, was Japan. Yet there was never any talk of a "trade war" with the United States or Japan ; in fact, friendly relations were assiduously cultivated with both. Commercial rivalry, it can be stated definitely, played but a small part in Anglo-German relations, and by the beginning of the present century that rivalry had passed. "The desire for peaceful relations," Mr. E. L. Woodward has written in his *Great Britain and the German Navy*,¹ "may be seen in the trades journals, and not least in the journals of those industries most affected by German competition." A similar view was constantly put before the German Government by its Ambassadors in London. Thus Count Wolff-Metternich (Ambassador, 1901-12) wrote to Berlin in 1908 :

I have been in touch with many representatives of industry and commerce in England and Scotland, and I have never found a greater desire for the continuance of good relations and greater anxiety lest these good relations should be harmed. *If the relations between the two countries depended merely upon the commercial interests,*

¹ Page 46.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

and all the representatives of these interests, our mutual relations would be excellent. . . . To attribute to (London financial circles) any desire for war would be absurd. They tremble with terror at any kind of political complication.¹

So much for commerce. In colonial matters the story was much the same. Originally, as we have already mentioned, Bismarck did not want colonies. Without a strong navy Germany, he knew, would find them only a source of weakness, and her geographical position made the possession of a strong fleet unnecessary, even as geographical position made it vital for Britain to maintain her naval superiority. In any case, Germany, in Bismarck's view, was a "satisfied Power"; the development of her resources and the preservation of peace in Europe were quite sufficient to occupy her energies. Nevertheless an agitation for colonial expansion developed in Germany, and the German Colonial Society was founded in 1882. Bismarck was not a man to allow public agitation to dictate his policy, but in the two years 1884 and 1885 it suited his purpose to give the colonial propaganda its head. Africa was now being opened up by the explorations of such men as Livingstone and Stanley; King Leopold II. of the Belgians was founding his independent "Congo State"; and France, under her Imperialist Premier, Jules Ferry, was extending her African territories. Bismarck hoped that France would forget Alsace-Lorraine in colonial expansion, and he gave, in consequence, every encouragement to Ferry. The result was a temporary rapprochement between France and Germany, and Bismarck tried to cement it by stirring up a minor quarrel with Britain, with whom France was on bad terms.² In pursuance of this cunning and unscrupulous policy Bismarck laid claim to territory in East and West Africa and the East Indies, territory which was not of sufficient value to cause a serious dispute, but which was sufficiently near to existing British colonies to give the British Government matter for thought.

¹ Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy*, p. 198. Italics not in the original. This view is endorsed—almost in these words—by Mr. Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 74.

² Taylor, *Germany's First Bid for Colonies, 1884-85*.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

A hectoring tone was adopted by Bismarck in his dealings with Gladstone's Ministry on this subject, but it was some time before the Government realized that Germany was serious—Bismarck's motives naturally remained secret—and valuable time was wasted in inquiring the views of the colonial Governments, who were reluctant to see Germans settled in territories that seemed marked out for their own future expansion. But Bismarck could not understand why Britain had to consider the wishes of her Colonies (modern Germany seems little less ignorant on this vital point) and threatened to withdraw his support of Britain in Egypt unless his claims were met. The British Government then realized that he was in earnest, and Gladstone welcomed Germany's colonial activity in a characteristic speech :

If Germany is to become a colonizing Power, all I can say is, God speed her ! She becomes our ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind.

Gladstone and his colleagues had not handled the situation in a particularly able manner, and their dilatoriness had created a bad impression in Germany. The German public, unaware of the diabolical ingenuity of Bismarck's policy, jumped to the conclusion that Britain was trying to block Germany's colonial expansion, and official circles thought that they had learnt that Britain could only be handled by violent means. The German Government developed a tendency to use its big guns on Britain whenever there arose a difference of opinion, however small, and this aptitude for violent methods of diplomacy was destined to have grave results. In Britain, too, the episode rankled. There was no desire to shut Germany out from colonies, but Bismarck's methods were resented, and in the years that followed it was German methods rather than German aims which gradually increased British suspicions.

Nevertheless the colonial problem was not a major issue. Whatever the difficulties, as in the case of Samoa in 1899, it was always possible for Britain and Germany to reach agreement on colonial questions, and there was never any

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

danger of war, such as threatened Anglo-French relations after the Fashoda incident in 1898. In commerce and in colonies, it is safe to say, there was never any fundamental breach between Britain and Germany. We must look elsewhere for the reasons which brought them into the Great War on opposite sides ; those reasons are to be found in *political* factors—in the policy pursued by William II. and his advisers.†

William II. was a man of marked ability and a truly Imperial figure, but he was tragically lacking in stability and tact, while his colossal vanity laid him open to the evil influence of sycophantic courtiers. There seems little doubt, too, that the deformity in his left arm exaggerated to hypersensitiveness a temperament that was by nature extremely nervous and highly strung. He seemed always to be acting a part, and it is not altogether improbable that he had constantly to drill himself into playing his Imperial rôle ; he certainly seems to have been more happy, since his fall, as a plain country gentleman at Doorn. If we add to these characteristics a tremendous pride in Germany's achievements, a sneaking admiration for Britain, and a passion for making public speeches, we have something of a picture of the Emperor. It is certain that, like Bismarck after 1871, he wished to preserve peace, but—and here again there is a resemblance between the two—it had to be a German peace, while, unhappily, the methods he chose convinced Europe in the end that he wanted war. The ring of enemies by whom Germany was surrounded in 1914 were largely enemies of her own creation. The real tragedy, for William II., for Germany, and for the world, was that the Emperor did not really know what he wanted. His policy was one of opportunism, but not, like Bismarck's policy, one of inspired opportunism. Bismarck had taken advantage of every turn of the European situation to ensure for Germany the preservation of peace. William II. similarly tried to turn to Germany's advantage every development in international affairs throughout the world. But his object was not primarily the preservation of peace ; he was concerned rather with the aggrandisement of Germany. Every event that could bring to Germany

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

some gain, whether of territory, of security, or merely of prestige, he exploited to the full. So he blundered from one "resounding success" to another, rattling the sabre as he went, and leaving everywhere a trail of bitterness and of ruffled feelings. In the end he rattled the sabre once too often, and other Powers accepted a challenge that he never really meant to give. He was essentially a lover of peace who conceived it to be his duty to advance his country's interests by bluster and violence. The contrast between him and his amiable and tactful uncle, King Edward VII., was never better summed up than by the Italian journalist who hailed King Edward in 1903 as a genial sun, spreading light and warmth wherever he went, but who compared William II. to a cuttlefish, polluting and darkening its surroundings.

It must not be imagined, however, that William II. blundered alone. Bismarck was compelled to resign in 1890, but the Emperor never found a minister who even remotely approached Bismarck in ability. Throughout the reign William's advisers were small men who had no sounder views on German policy than the Emperor himself, and some of them—such as Tirpitz, who inspired naval policy, and Holstein, the secret controlling influence in the Foreign Office—must bear a tremendous share of responsibility for the final tragedy. The German public, too, was in a "jingoistic" mood, justly proud of its country's achievements and anxious that she should play a leading part in world affairs. There was a good deal of criticism of the Emperor, but the "my country right or wrong" attitude was as common in Germany as elsewhere, while German official propaganda has always been exceptionally effective. Everything depended, in other words, on the wisdom of Germany's rulers, and in wisdom they proved singularly lacking.

After the removal of Bismarck, William II.'s next step was to refuse to renew the "Reinsurance Treaty" with Russia. The step may have been inevitable under existing conditions, as the relations between the two Empires were not good. The results, however, were disastrous for Germany, as Russia and France drew together, and Bismarck's

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

worst fears were realized when a Franco-Russian Treaty of Alliance was signed in 1893. This meant either that Germany must be content with Austria-Hungary as an ally—which would entail support of Austria through thick and thin—or that she must secure the friendship of Britain as a check on France. Yet William II. and his advisers threw away British friendship, and by committing themselves to unlimited support of Austria-Hungary made the Great War almost inevitable.

The great opportunity for an Anglo-German alliance came during the Boer War. Britain then realized the extent, and the danger, of her isolation in Europe, for Russia and France were openly hostile, and the Tsar even suggested that Russia, France, and Germany should bring pressure to bear upon Britain to stop the war. The suggestion was at once rejected by William II., who refused to be swayed on this occasion by the pro-Boer agitation in Germany, though at the time of the Jameson Raid, in the last days of 1895, he had toyed with the idea of intervention and had sent the famous "Kruger Telegram." Now, however, he was less willing to champion the Boers, and the time seemed ripe for an Anglo-German understanding. Lord Salisbury had expressed to Queen Victoria some years earlier his fear that, if Britain remained isolated, the rival continental Powers "might treat the English Empire as divisible booty, by which their differences might be adjusted," and the Boer War—with its evidence of Britain's unpopularity in Europe—brought that danger uncomfortably near. Once more the interconnection of colonial and foreign affairs was apparent, and a revival of the anti-British coalition formed at the time of the War of American Independence seemed to be threatening.

Several attempts were therefore made to escape from isolation by forming what Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, called "the natural alliance . . . between us and the great German Empire." Chamberlain was keenly interested in these attempts, in which he played a leading part, but although he used the word "alliance" he did not mean that there should be more than a close friendly understanding—a true *Entente*—between the two countries.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

A close alliance, with definite military commitments, would not have been acceptable to British opinion, and Parliament would not have sanctioned an automatic obligation to support Germany and her Allies in case of war. Britain's chief aim, as Professor Seton-Watson has said,¹ "was to win over or detach Powers who might otherwise join a hostile combination against her," whereas Germany "started from the assumption" that if any alliance were formed it "would be necessarily directed *against* other Powers," and particularly against France. Here was a fundamental difference of outlook which made an agreement difficult. Germany insisted upon a full and formal alliance, and was certain that she would get it in the end, as Britain's isolation was so complete. But Chamberlain had already warned the German Government that, if these attempts at an Anglo-German agreement failed, Britain would turn to France and Russia and come to terms with them. This warning was disregarded in Berlin, where it was considered to be "only a bogey invented to sober us."² William II. and his advisers felt that they could safely "leave hope shimmering on the horizon,"³ for Britain's position was so dangerous that she must eventually accept any terms Germany might like to demand. The idea of a British understanding with France and Russia was dismissed as absurd: mutual rivalries seemed too great. This was the crowning error of Germany's diplomacy, and one for which she was to pay dearly, for Britain, finding Germany unresponsive, adopted the very policy which William II. regarded as impossible, and sought elsewhere the friendship she needed as an antidote to the dangers of isolation.

The first step was an alliance with Japan in 1902 as a precaution against Russian activities in the Far East. Then, in 1903, the outstanding colonial differences of Britain and France were removed in a series of discussions, and the results were embodied in the "Convention," signed in April 1904, which inaugurated the *Entente*. Three years

¹ *Britain in Europe*, p. 582.

² *Ibid.*, p. 589.

³ Brandenburg, *From Bismarck to the World War*, p. 181.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

later a similar "Convention" was arranged with Russia. A "Triple Entente" had come into existence as a balance to the "Triple Alliance" of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the not altogether willing Italy. Germany was much alarmed by these moves, and saw in them a diabolical plot to surround her with an "iron ring." The evil genius of the whole affair, in William II.'s view, was Edward VII., but such an opinion is fantastic nonsense. It is true that the two men disliked each other: William once spoke of the King as an "old peacock," and Edward returned the compliment when he said with relief, after one of William's visits, "Thank God, he's gone!" But King Edward was a constitutional ruler, the *Entente* policy was his Ministers' policy; it was the King's task to cement, not to arrange, the understanding with France. Unlike his mother, he was no politician, but his tact and good humour were valuable assets, and it was he who won over the French public when he visited Paris in 1903. In the short space of three days he turned cries of "Vivent les Boers" into shouts of "Vive notre Roi." His geniality did much to turn the political *Entente* into a real understanding between the British and French peoples.

Germany's reaction to the Anglo-French *Entente* was an attempt to break it. In 1905 a dispute arose over French activities in Morocco (which had been recognized by Britain in the 1904 Convention as a French "sphere of influence"), and by a show of force, including a theatrical visit of William II. to Tangier, Germany tried to compel France to abandon the British connection. But at the Algeiras Conference of 1906, where the Moroccan question was discussed, Britain gave her full support to France, and the German threats served only to cause the two countries to draw closer together in self-protection. As a result there followed the "Staff Talks" between British and French naval and military experts. These talks have been much criticized, because they seemed to pave the way for a military alliance—and therefore for war—but Sir Edward Grey, who became Foreign Secretary in 1905, made it clear that neither Government was bound by them to any particular policy, while, as we shall see, he spent the

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

next eight years in striving to improve relations with Germany.

Two more episodes, in 1908 and 1911, increased the tension and further strengthened the *Ententes*. In 1908 Austria-Hungary took advantage of a revolution in Turkey to declare the annexation of the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina, which she had occupied since 1878. Serbia was much alarmed at this evidence of an Austrian desire for further expansion in the Balkans, and appealed to Russia for help. But Russia had not yet recovered from her defeat in the war with Japan three years before, and was not strong enough to intervene. Germany, knowing Russia's weakness, stood "in shining armour," as William II. said, beside her ally, Austria-Hungary, and Russia was powerless to defend her Balkan kinsmen. It was a humiliation which Russia could never suffer again, and Germany made a tragic error when she assumed that in 1914 the Tsar would once more stand aside and leave the Serbs to be crushed by Austria. The events of 1908 have well been described as a "grand rehearsal" for the Great War.¹

Another rehearsal took place in 1911. In that year French troops marched to the Moroccan capital, Fez, to suppress a rising against the Sultan of Morocco. Germany at once protested that the agreements made at Algeciras in 1906 had been broken, and sent a gunboat, the *Panther*, to the obscure Moroccan port of Agadir. Once more the *Entente* stood the strain. A strong speech by Mr. Lloyd George—in those days celebrated for his pacifist views—made it clear to Germany that Britain would support France if she were attacked, and Germany at once moderated her tone, granting France a free hand in Morocco in return for colonial concessions in the French Congo. Violent methods and a clumsy handling of the situation had gained Germany nothing, and had merely strengthened the prevailing opinion that she wanted war. This opinion had been gaining ground in Britain for several years as the result of Germany's action in building a powerful navy. We must now consider briefly that naval rivalry which, more

¹ Gooch, *History of Modern Europe, 1878-1919*, p. 426.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

than anything else, poisoned Anglo-German relations in the ten years before the Great War.

The German Navy was William II.'s toy. From the early years of his reign the Emperor longed to see Germany a great naval Power, for a study of British history and British policy had shown him how great a part naval strength could play in a nation's development. He liked tall ships, it has been said, as an earlier Hohenzollern (King Frederick William I. of Prussia, 1713-40) had liked tall soldiers.¹ But he never realized that for Germany, the greatest military Power in the world, a strong navy was, as Mr. Winston Churchill (then First Lord of the Admiralty) said in 1912, "something in the nature of a luxury," whereas for Britain the navy was a vital necessity, the first—and by far the most important—line of defence. Hence the "naval race" which raised suspicion and bitterness on both sides to so tragic a pitch. Count Wolff-Metternich, the Ambassador, was one of the Germans who appreciated the British point of view; "a defeat in the North Sea means the end of the British world Empire," he wrote to Berlin in 1908, "a lost battle on the Continent is a long way from the end of Germany."² But such arguments were lost upon William II. and his evil genius, Tirpitz. They were obsessed with the idea that Germany must be strong at sea in order to assert her position as a world Power and in order to prevent any British interference with Germany's development. Their first naval programme was inaugurated in 1898, but progress was slow (partly because of public indifference in Germany), and it was not until 1906 that the naval question began to dominate the diplomatic scene. The Conservative "landslide" took place in that year, and Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal Government, anxious to spend money on social services rather than on armaments, was determined from the first to improve relations with Germany and to work for a general reduction of armaments. The Foreign Secretary was Sir Edward Grey (later Viscount Grey of Fallodon), a man of the highest character and ideals, well-suited by

¹ Woodward, *Great Britain and the German Navy*, p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

disposition and temperament to direct—and, to some, to personify—British policy during one of the gravest periods of his country's history. Grey had his limitations, the most serious being, perhaps, his ignorance of foreign countries and foreign opinions (though it must be remembered that the directors of German policy were manifestly no less ignorant of Britain), but there can be no questioning his ardent desire for peace. "I hate war, I hate war," was his anguished cry when he was congratulated on his great speech in the Commons on August 3, 1914, and he wept when telling the American Ambassador of the ultimatum sent to Germany.

Grey's policy can best be summed up in the words written by Prince Lichnowsky (German Ambassador, 1912-14) during the War :

It was not his (Grey's) object to isolate us (Germany), but to the best of his power to make us partners in the existing association. . . . Without interfering with England's existing friendship with France and Russia, a friendship which has no aggressive aims . . . he wished to arrive at a friendly *rapprochement* and understanding with Germany, in order "to bring the two groups nearer."¹

Grey's policy, in other words, was to bridge the gulf between the Dual Alliance (France and Russia) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy) by making an *Entente* with Germany. Lichnowsky, like the three previous German Ambassadors in London, realized full well the peaceful and friendly nature of British policy. It was blind folly (though not necessarily any desire for war) that led William II. constantly to reject the opinions and advice of his Ambassadors, and to rely rather upon the evil influence of his military and naval "experts." The final tragedy, due so much to this folly, broke Lichnowsky's heart.

In accordance with his policy, Grey made every endeavour, after 1906, to remove all causes of friction in Anglo-German relations, and the most serious problem he tackled was that of naval rivalry. It was made clear to the German Government that Britain's naval superiority would

¹ Lichnowsky, *Heading for the Abyss*, pp. 50-51.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

be maintained, whatever the cost, but at the same time constant efforts were made to induce Germany to agree to a proportionate reduction of the navies of both countries. Unfortunately, William II. treated every offer as a sign of weakness, and as an endorsement of the view put later to Colonel House, President Wilson's friend, by Tirpitz, who insisted that "it was peace that Germany wanted, but the way to maintain it was to put fear into the hearts of her enemies."¹ A distinguished German diplomatist, von Kühlmann, has deplored this tendency, so glaringly revealed by Tirpitz, to base German policy upon "the exaggerated estimation of fear as an instrument of negotiation."²

Grey grappled with this hopeless attitude, but William II. refused to make any naval concessions unless Britain would undertake to remain neutral in the event of a Franco-German war. Without such a guarantee the Emperor would not reduce his navy, for, as he said, he "did not wish good relations at the expense of the fleet."³ It was on this note that negotiations broke down in 1912, for, quite apart from any moral obligation caused by the *Entente*, Britain could not allow France to become the victim of a German attack. King George V. made this clear to Prince Henry, William II.'s brother, at the end of 1912.⁴ With Germany in a strong naval position, with France subdued, and with the Tirpitz policy in control at Berlin, Britain's security—and with it much of her Empire—would have been doomed. Therein lies the explanation of our reluctant plunge into war in 1914.

Yet the failure of the naval negotiations did not deter Grey from further attempts to bring Britain and Germany to an understanding. By June 1914 agreement had been reached on two outstanding questions—the Berlin-Bagdad Railway, and the fate of the Portuguese Colonies if Portugal (then in the throes of revolution) should abandon them. Once again colonial and commercial problems had proved

¹ *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, vol. i., p. 257.

² *Thoughts on Germany*, p. 182.

³ Seton-Watson, *Britain in Europe*, p. 609.

⁴ Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 230.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

more amenable to reason and discussion than political differences.

Even while these colonial discussions were proceeding Europe had been presented with another crisis by the Balkan wars of 1912-13. But the trouble was localized for the moment by a Conference held in London, with Grey as President, a revival—on Grey's own suggestion—of the nineteenth-century "Concert." Grey himself was much impressed by the success of this experiment in international co-operation, and, as he shows in his *Twenty-Five Years*,¹ he believed to the end of his days that if Germany had agreed to the summoning of such another Conference in 1914 war might have been averted. It was this belief that made him, after the War, so convinced a supporter of the League of Nations.

Yet, in the end, Grey's work seemed to have been done in vain. When the final blow fell, and all attempts at mediation failed, a declaration of war by Britain was unavoidable, though it was only the invasion of Belgium which brought home to the public the serious nature of the crisis. King George V. summed up the feelings of most Englishmen when he said to the American Ambassador, throwing up his hands in despair, "My God, Mr. Page, what else could we do?"²

This chapter may be concluded with a final word on the reasons for the Anglo-German conflict. We fought Germany, it must be said, because she strove to add great sea-power to her overwhelming land-power. William II. spent more than £200,000,000 on his fleet; as a result he drove a friendly Britain into the arms of his enemies. This is not to say that all the errors were on one side only. British policy was not without its fill of blunders, and long before the War Germans resented Britain's attitude—her wealth, her superiority, and her complacency. There was as much talk of Britain's decay in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century as there has been in Italy in recent years. But a German who fought through the War, and who now occupies the highest position in the German

¹ Vol. ii., pp. 109-10.

² *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, vol. i., p. 309.

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

State, has set down his own criticism of Germany's pre-War policy. "No sacrifice would have been too great in order to gain England's alliance," Hitler has written in *Mein Kampf*:

It would have meant renunciation of colonies and importance on the sea, and refraining from interference with British industry by our competition. . . . There would never have been a World War.¹

Serious misunderstandings between the two countries did much to bring about the Great War. It is to be hoped that in the future it may be possible to avoid those misunderstandings between the two peoples who now—as before 1914—desire only peace.

¹ Pages 64-65 in the English edition.

CHAPTER IX

BRITAIN AND THE WORLD SINCE THE WAR

It has often been maintained that, if Germany had been warned in time that Britain would support France, and, in particular, would defend the integrity of Belgium, the German Government would not have given to Austria-Hungary the unlimited support which caused the Austrian attack on Serbia to develop into a World War. Even Mr. Lloyd George has enshrined this opinion in his *War Memoirs*. But to speculate in this way upon the "Ifs" of history is vain. Mr. Lloyd George had warned the Germans themselves at the time of the Agadir crisis, and his warning had been several times repeated—notably by King George in his conversation with Prince Henry in 1912. Attempts have been made to maintain that King George used other language in a later conversation with the Prince during the final crisis, that he spoke of British "neutrality." But this charge has been completely refuted by Dr. Jagow, archivist of the House of Hohenzollern, from the accounts of the conversation made by Prince Henry himself.¹ It can be said with certainty that, whether or not the military leaders of Germany wanted war with Britain, they were quite prepared to risk such a war. The small British army they naturally regarded with contempt (Bismarck had said earlier that if British troops ever invaded Germany he would send the police to arrest them!), while they expected to be in Paris in a fortnight, long before British assistance to France could be effective. In any case, they believed that Britain would be crippled by domestic problems—by the labour and suffragette agitation and the growing menace of civil war in Ireland. Had

¹ The *Times*, June 30, 1938.

SINCE THE WAR

Britain possessed an army of strength even approaching that of the continental armies her voice might have been effective, if raised in time. As it was, Germany took the risk and there followed a war fought, as Mr. H. A. L. Fisher has said, "between the most highly civilized peoples in Europe on an issue which a few level-headed men could easily have composed, and with respect to which ninety-nine per cent. of the population were wholly indifferent."¹ Yet it is not possible to lay the whole blame for the catastrophe (which cost the world some 25 million lives) upon any one man, or group of men, or even upon any one country. Those few who wanted war, or were willing to risk it, did not want *this* kind of war. The great tragedy was that when once the dreadful machine had started it proved impossible to stop it until all were exhausted and a great part of Europe was in ruins. No one in 1914 wanted what the War finally brought, and this explains why the German people have indignantly—and properly—repudiated the stain of "war guilt." "The ultimate cause of the explosion," one of the greatest authorities on this period has said, "was the European anarchy, the absence of international machinery, the doctrine of the unfettered sovereign national state, the universal assumption that the graver disputes could only be settled by the sword."²

It was precisely this "International Anarchy" (which gives the title to Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson's well-known book on this subject) that the nations tried to remedy after the War by the establishment of the League of Nations, and the League supplies one of the main threads of post-War history. The disastrous events of 1914 had revealed clearly the necessity for some system of international co-operation, on a permanent basis, for the preservation of peace. At the same time, as far as Britain was concerned, the years between 1871 and 1914 had pointed the importance not only of international co-operation but also of closer British co-operation with the continental States in the affairs of Europe. A timely British warning to Germany during the final crisis might not have produced any effect, in view of Britain's military weakness. Yet it was clear that Britain

¹ *A History of Europe*, p. 1,221.

² Gooch, *Before the War*, vol. ii., p. vi.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

must devise means for making her influence felt on the Continent as much in peace as in war, and the League of Nations, which set out to cure the international anarchy, seemed also to offer the means whereby Britain could accomplish this object.

One further fact emerged from the War itself, a complete change in the attitude of peoples and governments towards warfare. Hitherto war had been widely accepted as a natural—and not necessarily regrettable—part of human activity. The general attitude was aptly summed up by the Albanian who regretted the ending of the Balkan wars of 1912-13, in which he had taken part, but added complacently, "Allah will send more wars." The reason for this acceptance of the "inevitability" of war lay partly in the fact that not until recent years had war been an occupation for any but the professional (though this had ceased to be true during the Napoleonic wars); not until States became more civilized—and more ruthless—was the whole population drawn into the conflict. The novels of Jane Austen, as has often been pointed out, make few references, and those only indirect, to the great conflict with France that was raging while they were being written. But the situation changed during the second half of the nineteenth century; scientific invention rapidly increased the efficiency and scope of the machinery of warfare, and on the Continent conscription made all the male population liable to military service. The process was shown clearly in the rise of Germany, which, indeed, did much to hasten it, and when it culminated in the Great War women as well as men were drawn into the struggle, while aerial bombardment brought the "Front Line" into the homes of the civilians. Now, with the further developments that have taken place since 1914, it would be impossible for any one to be neutral or pacifist in another Great War. We have reached the era of "totalitarian war," when all the resources of the State, human and material alike, would be flung into any combat that arose, even as they are utilized by the "totalitarian" dictators in the everyday life of their countries.

This tremendous change in the character of war—which

SINCE THE WAR

has accompanied the great increase of popular interest in political matters and the growth in popular control—combined with the natural revulsion of feeling after the Great War to change completely the attitude of fatalism so long adopted towards war. Hitherto International Law had concerned itself mainly with the mitigation of the barbarity of war; now it was to attempt to abolish war itself, and the instrument which was intended to begin the process was the League of Nations. If the Great War had truly been “a war to end war” some other means had to be found for settling international disputes and difficulties. A League of Nations, a permanent international organization, was the obvious means for building up a new international order which should replace the anarchy of the pre-War years. Thus the threads which Castlereagh had been compelled to drop a century before were now once more picked up. But experience was to prove that many of the very difficulties which had hampered Castlereagh’s ideas were to recur, especially in connection with British policy. Before we turn, however, to consider the reactions of Britain to the new conditions of the post-War world, the slight sketch of a background which we have been making must be filled in a little more. In particular, a few points which have had a definite bearing upon British policy must be considered.

In the first place, it must be remembered that the Covenant of the League of Nations did not by any means “abolish” war or ignore the possibility of its recurrence. Even the Briand-Kellogg “Pact of Paris” of 1928, which “outlawed” war, allowed “defensive” war—a loophole which has been well used by some Powers. The Covenant aimed chiefly at providing the machinery whereby disputes could be settled peacefully. And this, for reasons which we must consider in a moment, was, in the British view, its main function. But, inevitably, difficulties arose. The aims and policies of the different Member States clashed only too frequently, and the problem of treaty-revision was, in the end, to throw these divergent interests into high relief. What was to happen to the League if certain States found that they could not get what they wanted by peaceful

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

means? or if they preferred other means for the achievement of their ambitions? "The League of Nations," one historian has said, "can be no better than the member States of which it is composed. If they wish for peace, the League provides machinery by which peace may be the better secured and maintained, but League or no League, a State which is resolved on war can always have it."¹

This difficulty was not unforeseen, and the "Sanctions" articles of the Covenant (XV. and XVI.) were intended to meet it. Any State that should "resort to war in disregard of its covenants" should "*ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League," who were immediately to apply what came to be known as "economic sanctions," the complete severance of commercial and financial relations. Military measures, however, were to be left to the Council of the League, which should "recommend" to the Governments concerned the size of their contribution to "the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League." "Military sanctions," in other words, were not, like "economic sanctions," compulsory, but in order to make economic pressure effective, naval measures—that is, a blockade—would be necessary. Therefore, even if the Council of the League did not "recommend" "military sanctions," the strongest naval Powers in the League would necessarily be involved in some form of "military sanctions," as their ships would be used for the blockade. This fact was to have no small influence upon British policy, for, with the United States outside the League, Britain was the Member State with the strongest navy.²

Further, the wording of the Covenant implied that, under the changed attitude to war, neutrality was impossible, and the general acceptance (by sixty-five States) of the "Pact of Paris" denouncing war has strengthened the view (admirably expressed by Mr. Wickham Steed in his *Vital Peace*) that no State can be neutral, under modern

¹ Fisher, *History of Europe*, p. 1,175.

² These points are further developed in Mr. F. A. Voigt's stimulating book, *Unto Caesar*.

SINCE THE WAR

conditions, when a war is in progress. This opinion, which was slow to take root, has been largely shattered by the events of recent years, but it remains implicit in the underlying conception of war as a form of human activity which has outlived any usefulness it ever had. If it were possible—as many hoped in 1919—to establish international relations on an ideal footing, a war against one would be a war against all; there would be no neutrality—and there would be no war. Mankind has long since discovered, however, that making the world an ideal place is no easy task, for the schemes that seem so obvious and so beautiful on paper can rarely be put into practice. The whole history of the world since the War has been a commentary on a remark made, from his own bitter experience, by Gladstone :

Men ought not to suffer from disenchantment : they ought to know that ideals in politics are never realized.

The limits of this book do not permit any further general examination of the " Second League Experiment," but the work of the League, as far as we have considered it, can be summed up under two heads :

1. To provide the machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes.
2. To strengthen this machinery by using economic—and, if necessary, military—pressure to compel a State to honour its obligations under the Covenant.

One of the main reasons for the eventual breakdown of the League has lain in the fact that, in spite of many attempts, it has not been possible to reconcile these two functions of the League and to provide them with a satisfactory common basis. The draft " Treaty of Mutual Assistance " of 1923 and the " Geneva Protocol " of 1924 both attempted this and failed. Different States, too, laid different stress upon these two functions. For France, with her passionate desire for peace and for security against any revival of the German menace, the second aspect of the League's work was the more important, and the French attitude to it has probably never been better expressed than by

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

M. André Maurois in his Foreword to M. R. de Traz's *The Spirit of Geneva* :

For the "average Frenchman" the League of Nations is first and foremost an institution designed to prevent wars. . . . The first, and almost the only, question we put to ourselves when with a critical eye we examine this strange international parliament, is this: "Is it capable, in case of conflict, of imposing a peaceful solution?"¹

The word "imposing" is not emphasized in any way, but it strikes the keynote of the whole passage. The French have constantly insisted upon the need for an "International Army," since to them the League is primarily an instrument for the protection of weak States against the strong, or the potentially strong. Narrowed down from a generality to a specific French interest—or, rather, to *the* specific French interest—this means that for France the League existed to prevent the possibility of another attack on the part of Germany. It must not be forgotten that France has less than three-quarters of the population of Germany, and far fewer natural resources, while she has known invasion twice within fifty years, and saw the German armies still in possession of French soil when the Armistice was signed.

The British attitude has always been fundamentally different. The Englishman, it has often been said, has a genius for compromise in politics, and he prefers to rely upon the methods of discussion and arbitration provided by the Parliamentary system rather than upon force. The end of the War, too, saw the usual revulsion in Britain from continental entanglements, and a strong desire to see the world return as quickly as possible to peaceful habits. For the Englishman, unlike the Frenchman, the War had been in the first place a tragic interruption of normal life, not another stage in the defence of the country against a powerful foe. There was no lasting fear or hatred of the beaten enemy in Britain, as there was in France; no haunting terror lest, as Poincaré feared, some day "they"—the

¹ Pages vii.-viii.

SINCE THE WAR

German invaders—should “come again.” As a commercial State Britain wished to see Germany, one of the best of her pre-War customers, once more restored to prosperity. There was no desire, born of fear, as there was in France, to keep Germany permanently weak and harmless.

In itself this contrast in outlook prevented Britain from sharing the French view of the League, but there were further factors which caused British opinion to stress the first—the mediatory—function of the League, rather than the second—the compulsive. It was believed that the League would be most successful if it provided a *moral* deterrent to those who might seek to break the peace, if, through encouragement of the habit of co-operation and compromise (upon which the British Constitution is based), it gradually induced States to forgo the doubtful benefits of war, and to seek the settlement of their claims by peaceful means. That peaceful habits of mind could be induced by threats of force was not the view of the British representatives who helped to frame the Covenant, as the official *Commentary* of 1919 makes clear :

If the nations of the future are in the main selfish, grasping and warlike, no instrument or machinery will restrain them. It is only possible to establish an organization which may make peaceful co-operation easy and hence customary, and to trust to the influence of custom to mould opinion.¹

This view was reinforced by the Memorandum, drafted by Lord Balfour, which Mr. Austen Chamberlain (as he then was) read at Geneva in March 1925. In the previous year there had been drawn up the “Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes” (better known as the “Geneva Protocol”), which attempted to strengthen the hands of the League by making “sanctions” automatic in action and more effective. It was hoped thereby to provide the sense of security which was vital to the thorough restoration of international confidence, and which, it was everywhere realized, was a necessary preliminary to the establishment of World Peace

¹ *Cmd.* 151, p. 14.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

on a firm and permanent basis. It is not at all certain that the Labour Government, which had had a great share in the drafting of the "Protocol," would have ratified it, but that Government fell before a decision had to be made, and Mr. Baldwin's second Ministry took its place. In the Memorandum read to the League Council by Mr. Austen Chamberlain it was definitely stated that the "fundamental task" of the League lay in "diminishing the causes of war," and if this view is compared with that of M. Maurois the underlying difference of outlook between Britain and France becomes apparent. The French wanted a League "designed to prevent wars" and "capable, in case of conflict, of imposing a peaceful solution"; the British aimed rather at "diminishing the causes of war." In the end the League fell between these two stools. Its failure was due not so much to any inherent weakness or impracticability as to the fact that the Member States could never decide how best to use this new international machinery.

The British attitude was further defined in the criticism of the "Geneva Protocol" made in the Memorandum :

The fresh emphasis laid upon sanctions, the new occasions discovered for their employment, the elaboration of military procedure, insensibly suggest the idea that the vital business of the League is not so much to promote friendly co-operation and reasoned harmony in the management of international affairs as to preserve peace by organizing war, and (it may be) war on the largest scale.

The Memorandum went on to draw a distinction between great and small causes of international disagreement :

The brooding fears that keep huge armaments in being have little relation to the ordinary misunderstandings inseparable from international (as from social) life—misunderstandings with which the League is so admirably fitted to deal. They spring from deep-lying causes of hostility which for historic or other reasons divide great and powerful states.

The light touch shown in the reference to "social life" detracted, perhaps, from the effectiveness of these arguments, but the suggestion that the League could not hope

SINCE THE WAR

to deal with major issues so successfully as with minor disputes proved, in the end, a sound one. The League grappled successfully with such matters as the expulsion of Greek refugees from Asia Minor by the Turks in 1922 ; the Graeco-Bulgarian dispute of 1925 ; the frontier between Turkey and Iraq (a dispute in which Britain was involved in 1925-26) ; the tension between Yugoslavia and Hungary after the murder of King Alexander of Yugoslavia in 1934 ; and the Saar Plebiscite (1935)—all of these, be it noted, being settled by conciliation, without recourse to the "sanctions" articles. Yet when "deep-lying causes of hostility" arose—when Japan attacked China, and Italy Abyssinia, and when the resurgence of Germany overthrew the Versailles Settlement—then the League failed, for then it was called upon to apply force, and the Member States were not willing to run the risks involved. "The whole problem of peace," Mr. Wickham Steed has said, "is a study of comparative risks,"¹ and it is now generally recognized that "sanctions" could never hope to succeed without at least the open and recognizable threat of the ultimate sanction—war. And from war all those States who have been most attached to Peace and the League have shrunk back. The failure of the League, writes Major-General Temperley (one of the British delegates to the Disarmament Conference) in his study of the Conference, *The Whispering Gallery of Europe* :

is due to the ingrained reluctance of any Government to run the risk of war and all the suffering and loss that it brings to its own people in order to preserve another State from aggression, unless its own interests are also at stake.²

The point has been further developed by Professor S. de Madariaga in some remarks on the Manchurian crisis of 1931-33 :

The members of the (League) Council were not acting in their personal capacity, nor on a personal affair ; they were watching over the lives and interests of millions of their countrymen at home, and bound to think twice

¹ *Vital Peace*, p. 311.

² Page 338.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

before these lives and interests were unnecessarily or foolishly sacrificed in an experiment which might or might not succeed. This is not to excuse their failure to appreciate the position if a strong collective action had been possible and likely to succeed ; but only to reduce to its proper dimensions their tragic if inevitable failure.¹

Mr. F. A. Voigt has made the final comment in his *Unto Cæsar* :

The League has failed to achieve the impossible.²

These three opinions may be considered as commentaries on a speech made by Lord Balfour in the earliest weeks of the League's history, when he described the two main dangers of the future :

One that the League may be thought of so little account as to be entirely inefficacious ; the other that it may be considered so capable that impossible tasks will be forced upon it to perform.³

" The League of Nations will serve you well if you do not overload it," he said on another occasion,⁴ and he was to prove a sound prophet. In its early days the League was, indeed, thought of little account, but its great success in the " Locarno Period " (1925-29) encouraged exaggerated hopes which were dashed in the years that followed. The Economic Crisis that dominated the world after 1929 radically altered the situation, and intensified its difficulties, while it drove into aggression the three powerful States with whom the League was to contend in vain—Japan, Italy, and Germany.

Balfour was, nominally, a Conservative, but (as his broad conception of the British Commonwealth of Nations shows) he represented the " enlightened conservatism " that is the characteristic feature of most parties in British politics, and, with the addition of rather more idealism, his views were shared in the main by the " official " elements of the Labour Party, while they were also the opinions of the Liberal Viscount Grey. In a speech at the Albert Hall in 1932 Grey opposed the view that the Man-

¹ *The World's Design*, p. 174.

² *Unto Cæsar*, p. 269.

³ Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, vol. ii., p. 305.

⁴ Slacombe, *A Mirror to Geneva*, p. 83.

SINCE THE WAR

churian crisis was a "test case" for the League, or that Japan could be restrained by "sanctions." He referred to the risk of war with Japan, and added :

I do not like the idea of resorting to war to prevent war. What we wish is to prevent war. War is a disagreeable thing, even if it is to be resorted to in order to prevent a war. It is too much like lighting a large fire in order to prevent a smaller one.¹

Similarly, although the Labour Party, whether in or out of office, strove for the strengthening of the League, its more responsible elements either did not want war at any price, or else did not believe that "sanctions" would entail war. Even those elements whose "levity" at the prospect of war shocked Major-General Temperley² during the Manchurian crisis would hardly have been so irresponsible if they had been in power. It is, after all, the duty of an Opposition to oppose, and when there is no likelihood of being called in to take a Government's place an Opposition may well feel that its utterances need not be restrained by considerations of prudence !

If we disregard the more extreme views—whether of "Right" or of "Left"—which are, fortunately, never popular in this country, it is not too much to say that British opinion on the whole supported Balfour's "limited" conception of the League's functions, which has been confirmed by events. And the reason is to be found in the considerations which have shaped British policy in the post-War years. We have already referred to the revulsion from the prospect of future war which filled Englishmen at the end of the "war to end war." It was accompanied by a great reduction in the armed strength of Britain, and by a general hope that the establishment of the League of Nations meant that the danger of war had passed for ever. The reduction of British armaments did much to lessen the influence of Britain throughout the world, and definitely hampered British policy in the Disarmament Conference. Meanwhile an ill-informed public placed exaggerated hopes in the League, not realizing that the setting-up of the

¹ Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 354.

² *The Whispering Gallery of Europe*, p. 320.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

League meant that the great struggle for permanent peace was only just beginning, not that it had already ended. A well-informed foreign observer, Professor H. Kantorowicz (once Professor of Law at Kiel and now in exile), has spoken in his book, *The Spirit of British Policy*, of the enthusiasm with which the work of the League of Nations Union was supported in England :

It was touching to see the fervour with which these people believed in the ideals of the League of Nations, and to witness their total ignorance of the fact that England stands alone within a Europe that is supposed to benefit by this faith . . . outside the group of countries consisting of Holland, Scandinavia and Switzerland, which stand under the ethical leadership of England, there is no such thing as any true feeling for the League of Nations : all the other States members of the League of Nations simply treat it as a new pawn on the board of international diplomacy, having no backing worth the name in public opinion. The men at the head of the " Union " are well informed and intelligent enough to be aware of these facts, but in the interests of propaganda they keep their knowledge to themselves, and possibly they are right in doing so. This explains the exaggerated hopes of the League of Nations entertained in England, from which there may be a rude awakening some day.¹

This was written in 1929, but it provides an interesting commentary on the gallant and noble, but not altogether well-informed, idealism that culminated in the " Peace Ballot " of 1935. The " rude awakening " has indeed come since then. The " fervour " which Professor Kantorowicz found everywhere was not directed towards the achievement of peace by compulsion (though the result of the " Peace Ballot " might suggest that) : it was based rather upon a faith in the existence of a general " Will to Peace " and upon a belief that the mere threat of " sanctions " would be sufficient to deter an aggressor. It was not realized that only war—or, at least, the certainty that war was intended—would stop a Great Power, driven desperate by lack of consideration and by the strain of the economic crisis. " Economic sanctions " seem

¹ Page 315.

SINCE THE WAR

an easy and cheap method of defending League principles, but their value is doubtful and their results, as experience has shown, cannot well be foreseen. This does not mean, of course, that those Englishmen who opposed the League of Nations were necessarily right: the blind prejudice that they too frequently displayed is open to even more serious objection than the enthusiasm of the more ardent supporters of the League.

If from public opinion we turn to governmental policy we find certain factors influencing the British attitude from the very beginning of the post-War period. The League of Nations itself was mainly an Anglo-American creation, based upon the combined efforts of Lord Robert Cecil, General Smuts, and the Phillimore Committee on the British side, and of President Wilson—the Messiah of Peace, as he saw himself—on the American. Without President Wilson's enthusiasm and determination the scheme could never have been carried through, but the basis of the plan was British. It was the President, however, who insisted that the Covenant of the League should be incorporated in the Treaties of Peace. This seems now to have been an unwise step, but it was hoped at the time that the League would soon be able to cure the imperfections of the Treaties, which (though they have been much exaggerated since) were obvious from the first. The tragedy has been that the States in the League have always been more concerned with methods of stopping a war (that is, with the second—the compulsive—function of the League) than with removing the causes of war (the first, or mediatory, function). And among the causes of war that were to bring most troubles upon the world were the disregard paid at the Peace Conference to the legitimate ambitions of Japan and Italy, and the treatment meted out to Germany both at the Conference and—worse still—in the years that followed.

It was not the close association with the Peace Settlement, however, that had the most disastrous effect upon the League. The worst blow came when the United States, anxious to return to isolation and to escape further entanglement with the hopeless affairs of Europe, repudiated

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Wilson's work and refused to join the League. The results were far-reaching. "Without the United States," Grey had written to a friend in 1917 :

a League would be at best but a revived concert of the Great Powers of Europe, liable at any time to split into rival groups. With the United States it would have a stability and be on a high plane that has never been attained by anything of the kind before.¹

The warning was prophetic, for when the United States refused to join the League Britain tended to reduce her commitments, leaving the Continent to the domination of France, then at the height of her power and security, as Germany was prostrate. With the United States out of the League Britain feared to commit herself too far in support of it, for—quite apart from her desire to avoid all conflict in the future—she was apprehensive that the imposition of "sanctions" at any time might lead to complications in Anglo-American relations, and with the United States Britain has long been determined at all costs to preserve the most friendly relations. "Economic sanctions," as we have already pointed out, would need a blockade to be absolutely effective, and that blockade would be maintained chiefly by British warships. But as the United States were not in the League, what was to happen if they refused to allow their trade with the blockaded State to be stopped? In the early years of the Great War Anglo-American relations had been strained by disputes over the right of neutral States to trade with Britain's enemies, and the problem, as we have seen earlier, was an old one. It was complicated now by the growing naval strength of the United States, and by British indebtedness to them for the support in men, money, and materials which they furnished to the Allies in the later stages of the War. Here was a grave British objection to the stress laid by France upon the "sanctions" functions of the League; and the objection was strengthened by the attitude of the British Dominions, who made it clear at the time of the Chanak dispute with Turkey (which caused

¹ Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 351.

SINCE THE WAR

Mr. Lloyd George's fall in 1922), and again during the Locarno negotiations in 1925, that Britain could not necessarily rely on their support if she were again involved in any European conflict. Further, there developed among the Dominions, and especially in Canada, a strong opposition to "sanctions" that was not restricted to any fear that Britain might want military support in Europe.

In view of her own military weakness Britain could not ignore these symptoms, and she was most anxious in any case not to impair the combination of unity with freedom which has been the characteristic development in the British Commonwealth since the Great War. British policy was therefore considerably hampered, and the natural disinclination of Englishmen to tie themselves in advance to any policy involving war was strengthened.

Another result of the American defection had even more serious consequences. In 1919 the French Government had been advised by its military experts that France could be certain of security against any possible revival of German strength only if she held the Rhine frontier. To this Britain and the United States would not agree, but they offered France, if she would abandon the claim, a Guarantee Treaty promising military support to France "in the event of any unprovoked movement of aggression against her being made by Germany." Unfortunately, when the United States refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and to join the League of Nations, this Treaty of Guarantee was also rejected, and Britain argued that her obligation to assist France disappeared as a result of America's action. The blow was probably the most severe that France had to endure before 1933. Both Britain and the United States had dishonoured their pledges, and France, with the Rhine frontier denied to her, was left to face Germany alone. Of the genuineness of the terror felt by France there can be no doubt, and she took her own steps to allay her fears. There followed the treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, and Yugoslavia—a revival of a traditional French policy. These gave France security by providing allies at the other side of Germany, who was now surrounded by a "French bloc," and at the same time France, under

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

the leadership of Poincaré, took up the policy of repression towards Germany that was to culminate in the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923. The results were serious. Germany was reduced to ruin by the collapse of the mark that followed the occupation of the Ruhr, and this, together with the feeling that she was being surrounded by an "iron ring" of French allies, laid the foundations of National-Socialism. Hitler owes most of his later success to the sufferings of the Germans in 1923, and it is possible to trace a direct connection between his coming into power in 1933 and the repudiation by Britain and the United States of the French Treaty of Guarantee in 1920. That repudiation, in fact, was nothing short of disastrous. It can be explained by American determination to avoid European entanglements and by Britain's reluctance to commit herself to military action on the Continent, but every endeavour should have been made to honour the Treaty. The main responsibility falls upon Britain, for, although British military strength was being reduced to a minimum, any promise of support given to France would have prevented very many of the ills of the post-War years, while France, conscious of security, might have been more willing to make timely concessions to Germany. Mr. Lloyd George knew the danger, and, in co-operation with the moderate Briand in France, tried to find a remedy, but both men fell from power before anything could be settled, while Briand was succeeded by Poincaré, who believed that "direct action" would be the most successful method of dealing with Germany. It was a great opportunity missed, for the mutual hostility of France and Germany was to be the chief stumbling-block to all the plans made, in the years that followed, for the preservation of peace. French statesmen remained incredibly blind, even after 1933, but part of the responsibility must rest with Britain. The Locarno scheme, to which we must now turn, was something of an attempt to salve the British conscience.

As the ideal of a world-wide League had broken down, Britain attempted to combine moderate support of the League with a practical policy of removing possible causes of friction. Of this policy the Washington Conference

SINCE THE WAR

of 1921-22 and the Locarno Treaties of 1925 were the supreme examples.

The Washington Conference saw the first attempt to grapple on an international scale with the problems of the Far East and of Naval Disarmament. China had been in a state of confusion since the overthrow of the Manchu Empire in 1911, and civil war was raging. The Powers assembled at Washington (the U.S.A., Britain, Japan, France, Italy, China, Holland, Portugal, and Belgium) therefore signed the "Nine-Power Treaty," pledging themselves not to take advantage of the weakness of China by seeking "special rights and privileges" in the country. Thus a dangerous source of possible friction was removed, and while China was still in a condition of complete anarchy the pledge was honoured. It was not until Chiang-Kai-Shek was beginning to impose unity and order upon China, and anarchy was gradually giving way to his firm rule, that the first great attack on China's integrity was made by Japan in 1931.

With the "Nine-Power Treaty" went other Treaties in which the States concerned gave mutual guarantees for each other's possessions in the Pacific Ocean, undertook not to alter the *status quo* in respect of fortifications and naval bases in the central Pacific area, and agreed on a programme of naval disarmament. The second of these agreements (that relating to fortifications and naval bases) was to be of great importance later, as it meant that there were no naval bases near enough to be used for checking Japanese aggression after 1931.

Britain played a leading part in these negotiations at Washington, and under pressure from the United States and the Dominions abandoned the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902. This step, however, did not have a good reception in Japan, where pro-British feeling was further cooled in a few years by the decision to build a great naval base at Singapore, which, though it was a long way from Japan, added to the Japanese suspicion that the "white" Powers were jealous of Japan's growing strength. The results of this suspicion—which was not altogether without foundation—were seen after 1931.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

One of the greatest dangers of the pre-War years had been the "naval race" with Germany, and Britain was determined after the War to avoid such fatal rivalry in the future. It was therefore agreed at Washington that Britain and the United States, between whom war was unthinkable, should possess equal naval strength and that the other Powers should accept smaller and proportionate standards for themselves. The Washington Treaty applied only to capital ships, and later attempts to extend it to smaller vessels failed, while the Treaty itself has to a large extent lapsed, owing to Japan's refusal to renew it after 1936. The principle behind the Treaty became operative again, however, when the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was signed in 1935, and although the Agreement, while it was open to criticism as a condonation of German rearmament, was never followed up and therefore failed to improve Anglo-German relations, it has justly been called "a tribute to British common sense,"¹ for it was the French refusal to permit *any* re-arming by Germany that encouraged Hitler in his more extreme courses.

The hopefulness engendered by the Washington Conference was increased in 1925, when the Locarno Treaties seemed to promise a settlement of the Franco-German hostility that has exercised so tragic an influence on European history during the past seventy years. The Treaties arose out of Britain's rejection of the "Geneva Protocol" of 1924, for the British Government, realizing that a purely destructive attitude would check the widespread desire for peace and security, proposed that *general* guarantees, such as that envisaged in the Protocol, should be abandoned, but that *definite* problems should be settled by the co-operation of the States most closely concerned. This was a more limited and more practical application of the principle of mutual support for the preservation of peace, which had been embodied in the Covenant and in the "Protocol," and it had the definite advantage of *pledging* no State to active support of another unless its own interests were directly concerned. As a result there came

¹ Carr, *International Relations since the Peace Treaties*, p. 219.

SINCE THE WAR

into existence the group of Treaties negotiated at Locarno and signed in London on December 1, 1925. Of these treaties the most important was that which confirmed the existing frontiers between France and Germany and Belgium and Germany, and placed them under the guarantee of Britain and Italy. France was thereby relieved of the fear of a German attempt to regain Alsace-Lorraine, and it was hoped that this sense of security would serve to remove Franco-German hostility and to pave the way for permanent peace. Sir Austen Chamberlain (his services at Locarno richly deserved the K.G. with which he was honoured) claimed, with justice, that Locarno marked "the real dividing-line between the years of war and the years of peace."

With the guarantee of the Rhine frontiers given by Britain and Italy went a promise of support to France *and* to Germany if the one should ever be attacked by the other. It was the most serious commitment undertaken by Britain since the War, and it is significant that it led to a very great improvement in the international situation. Britain had at last found the means of reconciling the necessity for co-operation with her dislike of formal military commitments, and it may well be that British policy in the future will revert to this Locarno system of limited guarantees, which, incidentally, won the strong approval of Viscount Grey.¹ It is now generally recognized that by undertaking these obligations to France and Germany Britain was not intervening unnecessarily in continental affairs; she was playing her part in the protection of the peace of Western Europe, which, as our survey of previous centuries has shown, is no less a vital interest to Britain than it is to France. The obligation was limited to Western Europe, and Britain undertook no guarantees with regard to the frontiers of Eastern Europe, which Germany has never accepted since 1919. Yet it is now realized that although Britain is not so vitally concerned with the East of Europe as with the West, she cannot remain indifferent to developments in the East, and this was made clear to the German Government at the time of the Czech-German

¹ Trevelyan, *Grey of Fallodon*, p. 355.

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

crisis which followed the German seizure of Austria in 1938.

Unfortunately the concessions to Germany which should have followed the Locarno agreements did not come quickly enough, for the sunshine of the "Locarno period" was soon obscured by the storms that arose after 1929, when the World Economic Crisis began its fatal course. The foundations of security had had no time to become firm, and the years that followed 1929 saw the shattering of the League system and the rapid return of the world to international anarchy. The pace was made by the three Great Powers who had grievances—Germany, Italy, and Japan. They were—not without reason—dissatisfied with the treatment they had received at the hands of the other Powers since the War, and their discontent, sharpened by the strain of the Economic Crisis (which sent German unemployment up by more than five millions and deprived Japan of half her foreign trade) drove them into open rebellion against the prevailing world order. Since the "satisfied" Powers would not make sufficient concessions the "Have-Nots" took what they wanted, and the world found itself back in the Dark Ages of the pre-War period.

Japan was the first to move. Since the Washington Conference she had been ruled by moderate and mildly-Liberal Governments, who had represented, in the main, the commercial and industrial interests of Japan. But now, as a result of the economic crisis, the semi-Socialist Japanese army took charge, and attacked China, hoping to establish in Japan some form of State-Socialism which should break the power of Japanese capitalism and bring prosperity to the Japanese peasant. The moment for the attack on China was well chosen, for Britain in 1931 was in the grip of her crisis, and many foreigners thought that Britain's days were numbered, especially when the "mutiny" (as it is popularly, but not altogether accurately, called) broke out in the navy at Invergordon. There is little doubt that this event encouraged the Japanese military leaders to pursue their aggression in China.

In the face of Japan's action the League was powerless. It is doubtful whether "economic sanctions" would have

SINCE THE WAR

been effective, and they would certainly have added considerably to the tremendous strain of the economic crisis through which the world was passing. Japan made it clear, too, that "sanctions" would be regarded as a *casus belli*, and the League States could not run the risk of war: none of them were prepared for war so far away, and, owing to the Washington Treaties, there were no fortified places near enough to Japan to serve as bases of operations against her. Much breath and ink has been spent in denouncing Sir John Simon, the British Foreign Secretary, for not taking a stronger line against Japan, but it is difficult to see how that could have been done. Britain had her hands full with internal problems, her armaments were at almost the lowest possible point, and she was bound to keep a wary eye on the Continent, where the situation was becoming more and more serious. Nor could she rely upon American support, for, as Mr. Henry Stimson's book, *The Far Eastern Crisis*, suggests, it is not at all certain that the United States would have been willing to adopt extreme measures against Japan. It is, perhaps, true to say that Sir John Simon took too narrowly legalistic a view of the situation, and did not allow his judgment to be swayed by any consideration of the moral issues involved, but it must be remembered that the League's successes had come hitherto from mediation, not from compulsion, while the task of checking by force a Great Power like Japan, at the other side of the world, was an experiment and a risk that Britain would very properly have hesitated to undertake, even if she had been at the height of her military and economic security. Palmerstonian methods can only rarely succeed when there is real risk of war.

The situation in 1935, when Mussolini launched a reluctant Italy upon the conquest of Abyssinia, was very similar. This time Britain took her stand upon principle, and "economic sanctions" were imposed, but Britain herself lacked the strength to ensure the complete defeat of Italy, and France pursued a hesitant policy, as she was more concerned with the increasing strength of Germany in Europe than with Italian ambitions in Africa. Italy could have been stopped if Britain and France had been

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

willing to run the risk of war, but from the prospect of war they both shrank back, as there is little doubt that Germany would have taken advantage of such an entanglement to attempt to achieve her ambitions in Central Europe. A general war would probably have been the result. How far Mussolini was prepared to go in making trouble for Britain and France was shown by his Spanish policy; early in 1936, before "sanctions" were lifted, he was in touch with those who were preparing a rebellion against the "Popular Front" Government in Spain. His aim was clear; Italian intervention in Spain, where both Britain and France had important strategic interests, was to be the price paid by these two countries for their opposition to Italy's aggression in Africa. A further result of the imposition of "sanctions" has been the creation of the much-vaunted "Berlin-Rome axis." Such has been the price paid for an attempt to enforce the compulsive powers of the League. The British preference for its mediatory functions has been justified by events. The real tragedy of the Abyssinian ~~dispute~~ was that it might have been prevented earlier if more attention had been paid to these mediatory functions, if Italy's just grounds for complaint against the other Powers had been given consideration—if, in other words, the League had concerned itself with the "fundamental task of diminishing the causes of war" rather than with devising means to stop war when it had broken out. Here, apart from the Locarno agreements, British policy must take a share of responsibility, for Britain did not give France the security that might have induced her to make better use of the League, while, from 1919 onwards, hardly any British politician tried to adopt a long-view policy that would have given a lead to British and foreign opinion alike. One observer has said of Britain's post-War leaders :

It seemed to me that they were so harassed by the stresses of day-to-day turmoil that a temporary agreement, which might lead to something else, passed muster as a policy.¹

¹ Temperley, *The Whispering Gallery of Europe*, p. 306.

SINCE THE WAR

The worst example of this hesitancy came at the time of the Abyssinian crisis, when the British Government allowed itself to be swayed by public agitation, but did little to guide public opinion or to explain its own policy. Mr. Baldwin's unfortunate statement that his lips were sealed (much exploited by cartoonists!) was a striking admission of the fact that the Government fell between two stools—between what it knew to be the soundest policy and what the public demanded.

In conclusion, one is driven to the view that British Foreign Policy has pursued an unsteady course since the War. It might even be said that, apart from the years when Sir Austen Chamberlain was at the Foreign Office, there has been no definite British policy at all.¹ Britain has not yet been able to decide exactly what her rôle is to be in the changed conditions of the post-War world. Every Englishman—apart from a few misguided, though vociferous, "isolationists"—realizes full well that Britain must play a more active and consistent part than she played before the War. All parties have agreed upon that, though they may differ as to the means to be adopted. The problem is to decide exactly what the British rôle should be, and the complicated situation that has followed the failure of the League has made it essential for every British citizen to think deeply upon a subject that vitally affects him. Public opinion must be guided and educated, and upon it must be based a definite and settled policy which will make clear to the world the precise aims of Britain and the precise part which she is prepared to play in the re-establishment of international peace. While the attitude of Britain is unknown, while her strength is underestimated, she cannot hope to take her share in the greatest task of the present century—the establishment of World Peace on sound foundations.

¹ The hesitancy shown by Britain in her relations with Germany since 1933 is, perhaps, the supreme instance of this lack of a definite policy.

EPILOGUE

THE first problem that confronts Englishmen to-day is to decide whether their country is to retain her position as a great commercial and industrial State, and as the leading partner in the remarkable experiment in international government that is known as the British Commonwealth of Nations. If that position is to be retained, the interests (*necessities*) which have been protected and defended in the past must be protected—and, if need be, defended—in the future. The security of the Netherlands, of France, of British communications and trade throughout the world (and not least in the Mediterranean)—all these must be guarded, unless Britain is willing to abdicate her position, to abandon all for which she has striven in the past, and to leave the mastery of the world to the forces of dictatorship.

To these interests must be added Britain's concern at developments in Eastern Europe, not least because those developments may have their repercussions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The guardianship of Palestine, and Britain's close friendship with Egypt and Turkey, are indications that the Eastern Mediterranean still retains the importance for Britain that it has long possessed. Any expansion, any "drive to the East," in Central Europe could not avoid penetration of the Balkans, and beyond them into Asia and along the road to India. That was the line of the Berlin-Bagdad Railway before the War.

But Englishmen would not wish British policy to be concerned solely with self-protection. If it stopped there, other countries would be justified in adopting a similar attitude, and the way to Peace would be no nearer. The years that have passed since 1919 have made even clearer than before the vital need for a sound and workable system

EPILOGUE

of international co-operation that would do something more than merely hold the world in a state of suspended development for the benefit of the "possessing" Powers. Peace is the greatest of interests not only for Britain but for all other nations. The wars of recent years have shown that there is very little to be gained by war to-day; it is certain that a general conflict would merely impoverish the world and stress still further the futility that marked the Great War. Under these conditions Britain must be prepared to make her contribution to a general appeasement, to show that her faith in Democracy is not restricted to Home and Imperial affairs. The League of Nations was an attempt to apply the principles of Democracy to international affairs, but it has never yet been worked in a sufficiently democratic spirit. In the future it must be shown that the Powers who can afford to make concessions are willing to make them; that they do not wish to keep their poorer brethren in a condition of permanent inferiority.

The first essential, of course, is to find a basis for discussion, a first step on the way to future co-operation. Here the problem presents enormous difficulties, for so much has happened since 1919, so many chances have been let slip. But the difficulties in the way are a challenge to Democracy, and they must be solved unless it is to be admitted that Democracy cannot solve the problems of peace, and that peace itself cannot be permanently secured. That Democracy must be strong to be respected is now universally admitted. Unless any concessions that might be made were backed by armed strength they would be regarded as invitations to further spoliation. It must not be forgotten that before the Great War Germany attributed the British desire for a friendly understanding to Britain's military weakness and her fear of German naval rivalry.

Finally, there is one problem which is peculiar to Britain. She must find the means of co-ordinating the policy of the United Kingdom with that of the various Dominions. Only if this is done can the full influence of the British Commonwealth be felt. And the process of co-ordination, with all the consultation involved, must be accelerated so that, as Mr. Menzies (Attorney-General of Australia) has

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

said, there may be "one voice of the British people . . . one voice, not six voices."¹

During the past two centuries and a half Britain, by guarding and defending her vital interests, has raised herself to a position of great power and prosperity and responsibility in the world. Now when, in spite of many set-backs, the progress of some form of internationalism is obvious, Britain must adapt herself to these changing conditions. It can only be done by reconciling the protection of national interests with the wider claims of international policy; neither must be neglected. In the past Britain has established firm friendship with some States (such as France) who had seemed her perpetual rivals, and with others (such as Russia) whose system of government had been antipathetic to British opinion, and there can be no reason to suppose that such friendships cannot again be established in the future.

We have considered earlier the principles of Disraeli's policy, as they were set out in his "Swan Song" speech,² and we may aptly conclude our study of British Foreign Policy with extracts from the speeches of three other great Victorian figures, Palmerston, Salisbury, and Gladstone, for the opinions of these four men, who did much to shape British policy, are not lacking in interest and importance for the Englishman of to-day.

The first extract is from a speech of Palmerston :

It is a narrow policy to suppose that this country or that is marked out as the eternal ally or the perpetual enemy of England. We have no eternal allies and no perpetual enemies; our interests are eternal, and those interests it is our duty to follow.

With this may be placed part of an address given by Lord Salisbury at Carnarvon in 1886 :

We think that a nation like ours should behave to other nations just as a man should behave to neighbours and equals among whom he may chance to be dwelling. If you wish to get on with the people with whom you are

¹ *The Times*, June 28, 1938.

² Page 100, above.

EPILOGUE

living . . . you must view your own claims and theirs in a just and neighbourly spirit—on the one hand never sacrificing any important and genuine right in respect to which you think that oppression or encroachment is being attempted—and, on the other hand, abstaining from erecting small controversies into envenomed disputes and treating every difference as a matter of vital principle. . . . I must add that what I call my neighbourly view of foreign politics extends beyond the mere controversies or disputes we may have with our neighbours. We must not only deal with them in a spirit of goodwill, recognizing the necessity of concessions on the one side or the other, but we must also recognize that the members of every community have duties towards each other. We are part of what has been well called the "federation of mankind." We belong to a great community of nations, and we have no right to shrink from the duties which the interests of the community impose upon us.

Finally, the greatest of all Victorians and the most impressive moral force British politics has ever produced, the man who will always be remembered as "Mr. Gladstone." He was enlarging at West Calder in 1879 on his desire "to acknowledge the rights of all nations":

You may, you must, sympathize with one nation more than another. . . . But in point of right all are equal, and you have no right to set up a system under which one is to be placed under moral suspicion or espionage, or made the subject of constant invective. If you do that, and especially if you claim for yourself a pharisaical superiority . . . you may talk about your patriotism as you please, but you are a misjudging friend of your country and are undermining the basis of esteem and respect of others for it.

On that note we may well close. The spirit behind the words of Disraeli and these other Victorians is the spirit that, of necessity, lies behind British Foreign Policy in the present age.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

THE following short list is not intended to be more than a guide to further reading on some aspects of the subject of this book. The selection is, perhaps, an arbitrary one, but it is hoped that it will help the reader to follow up topics of particular interest, without overburdening him with masses of literature.

Fisher, H. A. L., *A History of Europe* (Book II., *Renaissance, Reformation, Reason*, and Book III., *The Liberal Experiment*).

Trevelyan, G. M., *History of England*.

Trevelyan, G. M., *British History in the Nineteenth Century and After*.

Cecil, A., *British Foreign Secretaries, 1807-1916*.

Webster, C. K., *The European Alliance, 1815-1825*.

Marriott, Sir J. A. R., *Castlereagh*.

Malcolm-Smith, E. F., *Palmerston* ("Great Lives" Series).

Ponsonby, Lord, *Queen Victoria* ("Great Lives" Series).

Trevelyan, G. M., *Grey of Fallodon*.

Grey of Fallodon, Lord, *Twenty-five Years, 1892-1916*.

Three volumes ("People's Library" Edition).

Spender, J. A., *Fifty Years of Europe*. (Covers the period 1871-1914.)

Spender, J. A., *Great Britain: Empire and Commonwealth, 1886-1935*.

Dickinson, G. Lowes, *The International Anarchy, 1904-1914*.

Carr, E. H., *International Relations since the Peace Treaties*.

Gathorne-Hardy, G. M., *A Short History of International Affairs, 1920 to 1938*.

Hasluck, E. L., *Foreign Affairs, 1919-1937*.

Steed, H. Wickham, *Vital Peace. A Study of Risks*.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Seton-Watson, R. W., *Britain and the Dictators. A Survey of Post-War British Policy.*
- Zimmern, Sir A., *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, 1918-1935.* (Especially Part III., *The Working of the League.*)
- Armstrong, H. F. (ed.), *The Foreign Policy of the Powers.* (Essays on the Foreign Policy of France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Soviet Russia, and the United States.)
- Temperley, A. C., *The Whispering Gallery of Europe.* (A Study of the Disarmament Conference.)
- Voigt, F. A., *Unto Cæsar.*
- Madariaga, S. de, *The World's Design.*
- Monroe, E., *The Mediterranean in Politics.*
- Kennedy, A. L., *Britain Faces Germany.*
- Macartney, M. H. H., and Cremona, P., *Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1914-1937.*

INDEX

- Aberdeen, Lord, 90-91, 96, 97.
 Aboukir Bay, Battle of, 58.
 Abyssinian War, 29, 145, 146, 147.
 Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), Treaty of (1748), 43, 44; Congress of (1818), 72.
 Albert, Prince Consort, of Great Britain, 91, 97.
 Alexander I., Tsar of Russia, 57, 62, 63, 64-65, 67, 71.
 American War of Independence, 48, 50-51, 52, 115.
 Anne, Queen of England, 34, 40.
 "Asiento," the, 36, 40, 42.
 Austrian Succession, War of the, 42-43, 44.
 "Balance of Power," the, 16, 17-18, 22, 29.
 Baldwin, Earl, 13, 132, 147.
 Balfour, Lord, 131, 134, 135.
 Beaconsfield, Earl of, 95, 98, 99, 100, 105, 106-107, 150, 151.
 Bismarck, Prince Otto von, 87, 94, 95, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 109, 111-112, 113, 114-115, 124.
 Boer War, 75, 115.
 Buckingham, Duke of, 27.
 Canning, George, 74-76, 78-79, 80-81, 83-85, 86, 95.
 Castlereagh, Viscount, 17, 59, 65-66, 67, 68, 70, 71-72, 74 *et seq.*, 85, 127.
 Catherine of Aragon, Queen, 21, 22.
 Cecil, Lord Robert, 137.
 Cecil, Sir Robert, 26.
 Chamberlain, Sir Austen, 131, 132, 143, 147.
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 115, 116.
 Charles I., King of England, 27, 28.
 Charles II., King of England, 22, 28, 29-30, 31, 32.
 Charles II., King of Spain, 38-39.
 Charles V., Emperor, 21-22, 23.
 Charles VI., Emperor, 39, 42-43.
 Chaumont, Treaty of, 66, 67.
 Churchill, Winston, 119.
 Civil Wars, 27.
 "Concert of Europe," 70, 83, 97, 122.
 "Continental System," the, 58-59, 62-63.
 Covenant, the, 70, 127, 129, 131, 137, 142. *See also* League of Nations.
 Crimean War, 75, 83, 96, 97, 98, 106.
 Cromwell, Oliver, 24, 27-29, 30, 35.
 Disarmament Conference, 135.
 Disraeli, Benjamin. *See* Beaconsfield, Earl of.
 Edward VII., King of England, 95, 114, 117.
 Elizabeth, Queen of England, 16-17, 22, 23, 24-25, 26, 32, 35.
 Elizabeth, of the Palatinate, 27.
Entente Cordiale, 82, 109, 116-117, 118, 121.
 Fashoda Incident, 109, 113.
 Ferdinand VII., King of Spain, 76-77, 78, 79, 90.
 Ferry, Jules, President of the French Republic, 111.
 Fox, Charles James, 61.
 Francis I., Emperor of Austria, 62, 64-65.
 Franco-Prussian War, 101, 104, 105.
 Frederick II. ("the Great"), King of Prussia, 43, 45-46, 50.
 French Revolution, 17, 52, 54, 55, 56, 67, 71, 81.
 "Geneva Protocol," 129, 131, 132, 142.

INDEX

- George III., King of England, 34, 46, 48-49, 50, 52, 59.
 George V., King of England, 121, 122, 124.
 George, David Lloyd, *IIIN*, 118, 124, 139, 140.
 Gladstone, William Ewart, 75, 91, 98, 99, 107, 108, 112, 129, 150, 151.
 Great War, 14, 17, 37, 49, 51, 58, 59, 60, 75, 81, 99, 101, 102, 103, 108, 109, 113, 118, 119, 122-123, 125, 126, 127, 130, 135, 138, 139, 149.
 Greek War of Independence, 81, 83, 84.
 Grey of Fallodon, Viscount, 17-18, 117-118, 119-121, 122, 134-135, 143.
 Guarantee, Treaty of (1919), 139, 140.
 Henry VII., King of England, 19, 21, 30.
 Henry VIII., King of England, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23.
 Henry, Prince (of Germany), 121, 124.
 Hitler, Adolf, 102, 103, 122-123, 140, 142.
 Holy Alliance, 71, 72, 76, 78, 79, 81, 83-84, 90.
 Hundred Years' War, 20-21.
 Industrial Revolution, 49-50, 52.
 Isabella II., Queen of Spain, 90, 91-92.
 Ismail, Khedive, 100, 107.
 James I., King of England, 26-27, 28, 30.
 James II., King of England, 30, 31-32, 34, 40.
 Laibach, Congress of, 72-73.
 League of Nations, 11, 12, 70, 122, 125 *et seq.*, 144-145, 146, 147, 149. *See also* Covenant, the.
 Liberation, War of (1813), 64.
 Lichnowsky, Prince, 120.
 Locarno, Treaties of, 15, 140, 142-143, 144, 146.
 London, Treaty of (1827), 84; (1839), 89.
 Louis XIV., King of France, 14, 17, 29-30, 31-32, 34, 38, 39-40, 41, 47, 56.
 Louis Philippe, King of the French, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91-92.
 Maria, Queen of Portugal, 80, 89-90.
 Maria Theresa, Empress, 43, 44-45.
 Marlborough, Duke of, 34-35, 38.
 Mary I., Queen of England, 22, 23, 24.
 Mehemet Ali, 84, 95, 96, 100.
 Metternich, Prince, 67, 87, 90.
 Miguel, King of Portugal, 80, 89.
 "Monroe Doctrine," 79.
 Mussolini, Benito, 145, 146.
 Nanking, Treaty of, 92, 93.
 Napoleon I., Emperor of France, 13, 14, 17, 20, 37, 53, 55 *et seq.*, 67, 68, 71, 82, 101.
 Napoleonic Wars, 37, 54, 60, 86, 126.
 Nicholas I., Tsar of Russia, 94-95, 96-97, 107.
 Nicholas II., Tsar of Russia, 115, 118.
 Palmerston, Viscount, 78, 86 *et seq.*, 100, 106, 145, 150.
 Paris, Peace of (1763), 11, 41, 44, 45, 49; Treaty of (1856), 97.
 Peninsular War, 63-64, 76-77, 80.
 Philip II., King of Spain, 22, 23, 24, 25.
 Philip V., King of Spain, 39, 40, 41.
 Phillimore Committee, 137.
 Pitt, William, the Elder (Earl of Chatham), 11, 35, 38, 44, 45, 47, 49, 50.
 Pitt, William, the Younger, 52-56, 59-60, 61, 63, 67, 69, 74, 82.
 Poincaré, Raymond, 130-131, 140.
 Quadruple Alliance, 77.
 "Reinsurance Treaty," 109, 114.
 Russell, Lord John, 91, 94-95.
 Ryswick, Peace of (1697), 38.
 Salisbury, Lord, 108, 109, 115, 150-151.
 San Stefano, Treaty of (1878), 99.

INDEX

- Seven Years' War, 38, 43 *et seq.*, 51,
 52, 80.
 Simon, Sir John, 145.
 Smuts, General, 137.
 Spanish Succession, War of the, 35,
 36, 38, 40, 46, 80.
 Suez Canal, 58, 100, 107.

 Temperley, Major-General, 133, 135.
 Thirty Years' War, 26-27.
 Tientsin, Treaty of, 93.
 Tirpitz, Admiral von, 114, 119,
 121.
 Trafalgar, Battle of, 53, 57.
 Triple Alliance, 117, 120.
 "Triple Entente," 117, 118.
 Troppau, Congress of, 72-73.

 Utrecht, Treaty of, 40, 41, 42.

 Verona, Congress of, 72-73, 77.
 Versailles, Treaty of (1919), 11, 133,
 137, 139; (1783), 51.

 Victoria, Queen of England, 26, 87,
 91, 100, 104-105, 109, 115.
 Vienna, Treaty of (1814-15), 11, 59,
 66-69, 70.

 Walpole, Sir Robert, 41-42.
 Washington Conference, 140-141,
 142, 144, 145.
 Waterloo, Battle of, 64, 67, 68.
 Wellington, Duke of, 63-64, 67, 76,
 87, 88, 89.
 William I., German Emperor, 102,
 109.
 William II., German Emperor, 17,
 68, 103-104, 105, 109, 113 *et*
 seq.
 William III., King of England, 32,
 33, 34, 39.
 Wilson, Woodrow, President of
 U.S.A., 121, 137, 138.
 Wolff-Metternich, Count, 110-111,
 119.
 Wolsey, Cardinal, 22, 23.

DATE OF ISSUE

This book must be returned
within 3, 7, 14 days of its issue. A
fine of ONE ANNA per day will
be charged if the book is overdue.

|

|

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY